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SIXTY YEARS IN UNIFORM



Howard Coster

JOHN FRASER IN STATE DRESS

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Sixty Years in Uniform

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by
JOHN FRASER

WITH A FOREWORD BY
MAJOR-GENERAL
SIR GEORGE YOUNGHUSBAND,
K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.B.

With 11 Illustrations

LONDON
STANLEY PAUL & CO. LTD.

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DEDICATION

TO the memories of BAND-MASTER LEWIS WALLACE,
COLOUR-SERGEANT DONALD MUNRO, and the countless
other good friends and comrades of all ranks in the old
FIFTH, now the ROYAL NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS, to
whom I owe the delightful recollections of twenty-five
happy years.

And to the many good friends, past and present, among
the YEOMEN WARDERS of the TOWER OF LONDON.

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FOREWORD

by

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE YOUNGHUSBAND,

K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.B.

Keeper of the Crown Jewels.

IT is with the very greatest pleasure that I, a Northumbrian by descent and very nearly a Northumbrian Fusilier, write a few lines to introduce the reminiscences of my old friend and comrade Yeoman Gaoler John Fraser. For upwards of sixty years he has served sovereign after sovereign from Queen Victoria to George VI and in this book writes of all his experiences and adventures during those reigns. An honest straightforward narrative which it is a pleasure to read and which should be in the hands of every recruit. The Royal Northumbrian Fusiliers will be the proudest regiment in the Army the day this book is published, for it gives their gallant history in the past, and heroic it is. After twenty-five years in the 5th Fusiliers, as it was then called, John Fraser by now a regimental sergeant-major, was selected to be a Yeoman Warder of the Tower of London and in the end became Yeoman Gaoler, a post he still holds. How any young man of spirit after reading this book can elect to sit at a desk in a stuffy office

when he can live a soldier's life of travel and adventure beats me. Anyway here's success to John Fraser's book and may it bring many a good recruit to the Army of the King.

Signed :

George Younghusband

Tower of London.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I HAD never thought to end my adventurous career by writing a book, although I believe such things have been done before. I have never sought publicity, and do not seek it now, and so, for my own satisfaction, I would like to explain how, in this instance, the unexpected came about.

On the occasion of the celebration of our golden wedding, my wife and some of the assembled relatives and friends heard me say that I would have no dealings with pressmen in the matter, having no liking for self-advertisement. Two of my hearers strongly disagreed, and, quite unknown to me, took some photographs of myself in State dress to a London newspaper, giving the paper at the same time some personal particulars of myself.

As a result of this I was immediately beset by reporters who wanted a 'story' from me. Well, I have to confess that such a request is a temptation to any old soldier like myself who, during sixty years spent in the uniform of his country's service, has had many experiences and, not unnaturally, likes to talk about them!

I talked! I told them stories of my sixty years in uniform.

And, somehow, that phrase 'sixty years in uniform' caught on, and in due course I was

approached with the proposal that I should write my autobiography.

Well, here it is! And you have to thank (or otherwise!) for it, not myself, but my 'baby daughter'—now well into her thirties—Mildred, and her husband, Ralph Wombwell, for the coming into being of this plain history of the life of a simple soldier.

J. F.

H.M. Tower of London.

SIXTY YEARS IN UNIFORM

CHAPTER I

A RURAL BEGINNING

SOMETIMES to-day, as I sit at my window in the Yeoman-Gaoler's House on Tower Green, hard by the historic Tower of London, I have a queer feeling that I have lived in no less than three worlds!

For the world I was born into, in the year 1860, seems to bear little relationship to the hectic, post-War world in which we live to-day, and the little medieval world which is enclosed within the walls of the Tower seems both older than and different from both the others.

That, I suppose, is no more than an old man's fancy, yet it is hard to believe that these sunny lawns, dotted with the picturesque Yeomen in their quaint Tudor dress, mingling so incongruously with the cosmopolitan crowd of sightseers in their modern clothes, and with the grey, grim old towers as a background, has the slightest connection with either the sylvan, primitive world into which I was born, the life of travel and adventure of twenty-five years as a soldier, or the world of rush and hurry that surges outside these ancient walls. . . .

But there it is—as Shakespeare has said: 'Times change, and we with Time. . . .'

And very certainly times have changed since I

first saw daylight in a tiny forester's hut on Foulden Hag, near the village of Ayton in Berwickshire, on 7 January 1860.

It may seem strange that an old man of seventy-eight, whose life has been filled, as mine has, with a variety of adventures, should still remember the little events of his earliest years with any degree of clarity, but it is because that life was so simple and so full of real happiness that it lives in my memory so vividly, despite the passing and the changes of time.

One of my earliest recollections is of standing in the doorway of our cottage (after we had moved into Ayton village) and looking down one narrow street, with its double row of low, thatched cottages provided by the laird for his workers—shepherds, foresters, farm-hands, and fisher-folk.

In my infancy my father had gone up to Ayton Castle to be gardener. Sometimes, sheltered by the old dark shawl my mother wore over her shoulders, I would be carried in her arms to meet my father on his return from work from his duties as gardener to Sir Alexander Mitchell-Innes, the laird. We would see his tall figure approaching from the gateway of the great building which dominated the landscape just as its owner dominated the lives of the villagers. Almost everyone in the place was employed at Ayton Castle, and proud men they were, my father amongst them, to be connected with so great an establishment whose lands stretched so far over the country-side and embraced so many branches of work on the land.

To me, watching him come down the path with his great strides, his knobbled stick swinging in his hand, he seemed very old, but he was at that time only in his early twenties, for he had married my mother in 1857 when he was twenty-one and she about a year younger. Even then, before he had

fully achieved maturity, he was a powerful figure of a man whose remarkable strength of body and mind earned for him the respect of all the country-side. He came of humble stock, for his father had been a shepherd in Inverness-shire, but had been coaxed from his ancestral surroundings in the 1840's to work as a navvy on the construction of the North British Railway from Berwick to Edinburgh.

After the completion of the railway my grandfather took up his old occupation as shepherd, and later he became one of the pioneers who established the New Zealand trade in wool and mutton. Both he and my father were natural gentlemen, neither of them capable of an untruthful or a spiteful word. They were never known to do anyone a bad turn. My father was sometimes angry, but never cruel, and was universally respected for his scrupulous honesty. He had little book learning, yet he was not ignorant, for he could form his own opinions and stick to them unswervingly in the face of all opposition. He was as puritanically religious as most Scots of the time and believed implicitly every word of the Old Testament. No man could have been more cautious even to the point of stinginess over money, though he would never see anyone in real want go hungry if he could help it.

I was proud, even in those days, to own him for my father. When we met, as I have described, my mother and I would turn with him and walk towards our home, with its single room divided into the usual 'but' and 'ben.' The partition between the two was formed by the beds, which were curious and somewhat unhealthy pieces of furniture, for we entered them through a kind of wooden door and could then close it and be completely shut off, for the bed was enclosed on every side by these partitions. It was rather like sleeping in a cupboard, but it gave privacy to compensate for the fact that the hut had

really only one room for the whole family—father, mother, my sister Ellen who was two years my senior, and myself—to sleep in.

There, sitting in the corner of the living-room, with its one bare table of wood and its fire-place built into the wall, I have watched my mother on her knees with pail and scrubbing brush, scrupulously removing every speck of dirt or dust from the uneven stone floor, and then rubbing it over with the sandstone which was the only floor covering we could afford. She would raise her dark, serious face with its lovable sweetness and push back a wisp of the hair she wore twisted into a loose knot at the nape of her neck, wipe the suds from her arms, which years of toil had made firm and sinewy, and then having satisfied herself that I was in no mischief, and that her pot of porridge was simmering to her satisfaction, she would return to her scrubbing once more.

When I think of her face, as I remember it, not in those earliest years when I was much too young to think of her except as a protector and as someone I loved, but when I was old enough to realize the struggle for existence she had, I feel for her the greatest respect and admiration.

She was of humble birth like my father, having been brought up as a farm worker in the same type of 'but' and 'ben' cottage as ours, but a more tender and lovable character could not have been found in the highest lady in the land. Often I have come in hungry from my play and devoured the porridge or 'tatties' and salt herring she had prepared, without giving a thought to the difficulties and restrictions which poverty and lack of conveniences imposed on her. But that was before I was old enough to realize her situation. When I look back on the upbringing she gave me, with its pride and self-respect, its scrupulous cleanliness,

its hardihood and independence, I know that my mother was fit to go into any society in the land and hold her head high.

The stock she came of was as sturdy and dependable as you could wish. Her father, John Cleghorn, was one of the most famous ploughmen in Berwickshire. On Granny's 'Bink' (a sort of sideboard) there stood twenty prizes won during his eighty years of life. He could drive a furrow across a thirty-acre field as straight as a beam of sunlight. He was neither rude nor ignorant. His slow broad dialect might sound harsh to the ear, but such things are merely superficial. Inside his head, as in that of my father who was of similar type, was stored a wealth of knowledge of every kind of land work—of cattle, sheep, poultry-rearing, of the growing of crops, fruit, and vegetables, and especially of horses. A little poaching of any type, bird, beast, or fish, did not come amiss either. They were fine people, my grandparents, especially that grand old lady my grandmother who lived to the age of ninety-three without ever having a doctor to attend her or even spending a day in bed, except at the births of her eight children. In the end she just 'snooved awa.'

Such was the stock my mother came of and a worthy one it was. I spent my first three years watching her at work, over her cooking and household tasks, for I had no toys. She had but one cooking pot in the world apart from her kettle. In that all our meals were cooked except when she varied things by using her girdle, a flat iron plate for the making of bannocks or cakes from a mixture of pease meal, oatmeal, and wheatmeal.

My whole life might have been different but for a last minute hitch which occurred when I was but four months old. I might have died miserably at sea in one of those storms which are so frequent

and violent in the latitude of Cape Horn. Or I might have become a sheep farmer in New Zealand, owning hundreds, perhaps thousands, of acres of downland, as some of my relatives may do to-day for all I know. But it was not to be.

It says much for the hardihood of my parents and their relatives that they could ever have contemplated such a scheme as emigration to New Zealand, especially when it meant trusting their lives and those of their two babies, Ellen and myself, to the stormiest seas in the world, and in an old converted sailing-ship of about three hundred tons. Consider the fact that the journey would take six months, the ship tumbling as best it could round the Horn, full of emigrants who had never been out of their own little villages in their lives before and had certainly never been on the open sea, and you will realize what kind of venture my parents proposed to undertake ! Consider also the fact that my mother, with her two little children would have gone out to a place where life had to begin all over again at the beginning, and you will realize what grit and determination there was in the ordinary Scot of eighty years ago.

Everything was ready. The party, consisting of my father and mother, Ellen and myself, our paternal grandparents, uncles, aunts, and a widow of sixty-five, my father's grandmother, had collected its few possessions ready to sail.

Then, one morning, a day or two before we were due to sail, there came an ominous-looking letter with a government stamp. It caused an instant change in my parents' plans, for it stated that no child under a year old could be taken to New Zealand, owing to the fact that every infant so far taken out had perished on the way !

My parents must have looked on me that day as more of a curse than a blessing, and as I grew up

my mother must have thought to herself many a time : ' If only John had been a little older . . . ! '

So they had to content themselves with seeing the rest of the party off, and waiting impatiently for more than a year before the first news of the emigrants reached them.

As I grew up and heard my father's stories of Uncle Dan gold mining at Ballarat and the others with their sheep farms growing richer every year I contrasted their state with our own poverty and echoed my mother's wish.

Some years later further news came to us of the New Zealand party which set the tongues of Ayton folk wagging for a week ! At that time my mother carried her head proudly and the village women looked enviously at her when she passed. For she was wearing a brooch made from a whole nugget of Ballarat gold sent by Uncle Dan !

The rest of the story of the emigrants is a mystery which has puzzled me for many years. Perhaps they are dead ; perhaps one or more of them have made fortunes—or perhaps their luck has failed them, or circumstances so conspired against them that they are in poverty. They may even have died thus. . . . Who can tell . . . ?

When I look back over my life I sometimes smile at the incongruous little incidents which have so deeply impressed themselves on my memory that they remain as clear and vivid as though they had happened but yesterday.

One of these concerns an incident which took place at Hogmanay time, when I was in my third year. There had been heavy snow, and it lay long on the ground, so that it was bitterly cold, and I much admired the bravery of the maskers who went round ' Guistering ' as they collected pennies from door to door in the terrible cold.

I was watching the approach of a party of these,

much excited by the old catches they were singing, and the quaint and grotesque costumes they were wearing, when into my vision something seemed to leap that has effectually blotted everything but itself from my mind.

A great round head, with a ghastly white face—of so unearthly a colour that I knew instinctively it could not belong to any HUMAN countenance—a pair of glowing eyes, that seemed to flicker with an obscene malevolence, nostrils that flamed, and a vast, gaping mouth with awful jagged fangs therein—the whole lit by a fearful glow that seemed to come from WITHIN it, rather than from any agency outside itself !

And, as it came, it swayed in a ghostly, inhuman manner, as though it was just floating through the air without any supporting body beneath it . . . ! And it was coming straight towards our door . . . !

In a moment all the stories I had ever heard of bogies, demons, and such-like horrors crowded upon me, and, utterly overcome by terror, I could not even cry out, but could only turn and run blindly to seek protection from the strong, brave, and loving arms of my mother. But, before I could reach her, in my panic I stumbled and fell down a flight of stone steps, badly 'dunting' my head.

Later my mother explained to me that it was only part of the show—a great turnip, ingeniously hollowed out and with a candle stuck inside to supply the unearthly glow that had contributed so much to my fright, carried on a pole by one of the maskers. But even that explanation, while it comforted me, did not dispel the fright which has impressed the incident so indelibly on my mind.

Another vivid memory of those days is of our evenings at home in the cottage, when my father had come back from his work and had eaten his meal. Then he would sit for an hour or so, gazing

into the fire which cast flickering shadows over his seamed and rugged countenance, and brightened the redness of his beard and great, bushy eyebrows. My mother, sitting by the window in her clean apron, which had taken the place of the black one she wore for her heavier work, seemed immobile except for the hands busy at her knitting. The needles clicked in and out and the kitten at her feet played with the ball of wool and now and then received a quiet word of admonishment. As long as the light continued she worked on while the shadows crept over everything—the great copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* with its crocheted back lying with the equally large Bible and the copy of Burns' poems on the table by the window, the china dogs on the mantelpiece, and the old sofa with its curved back. Slowly the great grandfather clock ticked out the seconds, the only sound to be heard apart from the occasional whimpers of the dog who lay at my father's feet, his ears twitching as he dreamed of exciting chases among the bracken.

For an hour after sunset my parents would sit thus, each lost in thought. Then, as the clock struck eight, my mother would put down her knitting and light the single oil lamp, hand my father the great Bible, and return to her chair.

He would open it at the place he had left off the previous evening, spread it wide on his knees, and slowly, in heavy sentences, begin to read, now and again glancing up to see that we were all attending.

We listened to the slow, solemn words coming haltingly from his lips; sometimes we yawned covertly, sometimes we puzzled our heads over the meaning of the words, and at others let them pass over us as meaninglessly as though they were written in a foreign language. But much of the reading passed into us and became as much a part of us as do most things learned in childhood.

In later life the memory of those early Bible readings has come back to me, and I have considered them in the light of subsequent experience. Much has been said against the stern religion of the Scots, and a great deal of it is justified. Yet I believe that those many chapters I heard night after night were not without good effect. The language was beautiful though I did not realize it at the time. It was only when I grew up that some old, subconsciously remembered text or story would flash into my head and suddenly its meaning or its beauty would strike me and I would realize that my father's enthusiasm of so long ago had not been entirely wasted.

After the Bible reading we climbed into our beds, though it was hardly more than eight o'clock, and slept as few people who are not outdoor workers know how to sleep.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOLDAYS

I MADE my first venture out into the world soon after I was four years old by going to school. Ellen, my sister, had been to school before, and walked with all the confidence of her two years' seniority, but I, on my first journey to the unknown world of school, was overwhelmed now and again with terror at the thoughts of what lay before me, though at times terror changed to curiosity.

I need not have worried. Mistress Green, I found, was the gentlest of teachers—a little, faded old woman, whose quiet voice yet contrived to win respect from us all. Those were happy days for me in the tiny room where she held her class—for she was not an exacting old lady and merely kept us all together out of harm's way while our parents were busy with their work.

It was a quaint little school, and was run by a quaint method of administration. I smile to think of the rudimentary education we received there, with its absence of teaching apparatus and the lack of almost all the facilities that the modern child takes for granted. Sixteen pounds a year is spent in 1938 on the education of every child in an elementary school. But, in 1864, the village school where I received my first teachings received a mere twenty pounds a year from the income of the Kirk for its maintenance. That sum was insufficient for the purpose of the schoolroom's upkeep and the payment of Mistress Green, so that the parents had to

give a trifle to the old widow for teaching us. My payment was the tin can of broth I took to school every Monday morning, Ellen's was bread. The rest of the scholars paid either in food or pence—two pence was generally considered enough, and those who were too poor to pay at all received their education free. Mistress Green chose to have food instead of money to save herself the trouble of cooking during the lunch hour.

Some of my happiest memories are of those days when I sat droning my alphabet, or bent my head and laboriously drew countless 'pot-hooks and hangers,' occasionally looking out of the window, through which I could see the birds sporting on the kirkyard wall, or in the open space which served for a playground.

Across the playground where we played 'tig and run' was the village 'smiddy.' The smith was our greatest friend and his picture remains in my mind as one of the greatest of my childhood's heroes. Many a time Mistress Green must have thanked God for his presence, for without him she would probably at times have found us too much for her frail little person to cope with.

The schoolroom was too small to accommodate all of us at the same time, so we were divided into two parts, and while half were at work the rest played either out of doors with their skipping ropes or in the smithy.

There we wandered round, trying to lift the mighty hammers, while the smith, as brawny and genial as the proverbial one of the song, jibed at us with his great laugh and so goaded us on to feats often beyond our strength. As we poked about, running our fingers through sacks of nails to enjoy their clink, he stood there in his leather apron, his great bushy head bent over his work, while the hammer rose and fell, punctuating the stories he

told us. Sometimes we watched, fascinated, while he took the wooden wheel of a cart and bound it tightly with a tyre of hot iron round the rim. As the metal burned into the wood the pungent smell tickled our nostrils, and we winced as the sparks flew out under his blows. Often when he was concentrating on some particularly difficult piece of work he would be silent for five minutes with head downbent, his brow seamed with a dozen furrows, and the sandy hair on his temples damp with sweat, while we waited eagerly for him to go on with his conversation. Then our pleasant respite would be ended by the tinkle of Widow Green's bell, and we would rush back to our pot-hooks while the rest of the scholars would take our place in the 'smiddy.'

All these pleasant happenings took place in the little village of Norham, Berwickshire, where my family had moved in 1863. My father had experienced a rise in the world by becoming coachman-gardener to a manufacturer at the handsome wage of twenty shillings a week.

Week-ends were perhaps the greatest joy of my early years, for by this time I had widened my little world to take in people outside the narrow limits of my family, and when school was over my friends and I were free to avail ourselves of all the opportunities of country life. All the quiet influences of Nature crept into us and gave us, year by year, an insight into the life of the wild things of wood and field, an understanding of the mechanism of Nature which has never left me. We felt that we belonged to the same world as the birds and the rabbits, and it gave us a sense of the wholesomeness and worthiness of country life. Perhaps I did not have this sense consciously in my childhood, for it is difficult to remember exactly when an appreciation of beauty begins. But in later life, when full maturity had been achieved I realized how deeply country life

had affected me and given me a background that was worth building a life on. It is my firm belief that, had I lived in a town as a child, the growth of my character and personality would have been sadly warped and stilted.

So we roamed the woods round Norham, learned the names of birds, and flowers, and trees, lay in the grass and leaned over bridges puzzling ourselves as to whether the shadows were caused by trout or by something less intriguing, sought birds' nests, and lay dreaming on banks, eating a dozen things—sorrel and young hawthorn leaves, peeled bramble shoots, wild strawberries, blaberries, and the nuts of hazel and beech.

Like all country children we had our pets. Tame rabbits were my particular fancy. I kept them in a hutch at the end of the garden. The hedgcrows were full of dandelion leaves on which I fed them.

Schooling of a more serious nature began for me at seven years old, when we moved to the old border town of Berwick where my father had been given better work by Mr. Black, his employer.

I went to school on Wallace Green, and expected my life there to be as pleasant as at Mistress Green's school. I was vastly disappointed !

The school was a huge soulless place with some two hundred scholars, each class with a separate teacher, and a fair number of modern conveniences such as forms, desks, and blackboards. Here I had a taste of that rigid discipline for which the schools of Scotland became noted, for there was order, obedience, and silence such as I had never known under Mistress Green's kindly teachings. Our fees, too, were increased, and all of us paid sixpence a week. But, although strict discipline was irksome at the time, I have reason to be thankful nowadays that I received my early teaching in so hard a school.

I crossed the border in 1869, since my father had once more changed his master, and had become coachman-gardener to a wealthy banker—Mr. Hoare, of Jesmond Dene, one of the beauty spots about two miles outside Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The nearest school to my new home was St. Thomas's Church School, nearly two miles away. It was different from anything I had previously known, for it was a two-storied building in the top storey of which the girls were segregated from the boys. There were about seventy of each under a headmaster and six assistant teachers. What a difficult task those six must have had, for each storey was but one huge room without partitions and the three had to talk against each other to their respective classes! Still, the place had its advantages for it was well provided with desks and forms.

I shall never forget the master who taught me in the middle one of the three classes. For he was that kind of a man whose fire for teaching burns so fiercely that it affects all who go near him and makes such an impression on them that they can never forget what he has taught them, nor the strength of the teacher. Such a man was Peter McVittie, a middle-aged Scot who taught me more lessons of lasting value than any person I have ever met.

Another figure impressed vividly on my memory is that of the church choirmaster. Only those who are able to sing or play know what joy comes from having a voice capable of expressing one's emotions. Many people have told me that they would prize the ability to sing more than riches, power, or beauty. For singing is the happiest, most carefree, and satisfying way to express one's delight in the world. Imagine my joy, then, when the choirmaster selected me from a crowd of others to become a member of the choir.

My father was a staunch Presbyterian in Church

matters, but wise enough to say, to my great joy, that if I had a voice worth training I might join the choir.

My training included the reading of music by staff notation, singing in tune by long and patient repetition, and correct enunciation, whereby my broad North Country accent was softened.

During my three years in the choir I acquired an invaluable familiarity with some of the most beautiful literature in the world—I learned the Book of Common Prayer almost by heart, and also the Psalms. I knew all the beauty of poetry and music combined in Hymns Ancient and Modern.

From those early days in the choir my character was enriched and deepened to an incredible extent. I got an insight into the beauty of words and music which I have cherished ever since.

The day of my leaving school is strongly impressed on my memory. It was a day of fear, of sorrow, of a good many reluctant good-byes, a day of decision whose importance lay heavily on my mind, which, at twelve years old, was in many ways more mature than that of the modern youth of similar age. For I was about to go out into the world as a worker whose earnings were badly wanted by my parents, and my working days were likely to be full of serious and not too well-paid labour!

It was a solemn occasion as the whole lot of us who were to leave St. Thomas's School that day lined up before the headmaster to listen to his farewell. We knew he did not want us to leave. I suppose he must have regretted my own going as much as any boy's, for I was by that time at the top of the first class. But he could not possibly keep us on; for he had neither the room nor the staff. "Now, boys," he said, "you've got to go. I'm very sorry but we can't keep you any longer, for your room is badly needed by the fifteen new

scholars we are to have. So good-bye ! Some of you may be glad at this moment to turn your backs on the grind of school and be eager to go out and try your fortunes in the world. But, before long, you will realize that your schooldays have been the happiest in your lives."

It was not long before I found that he was right !

CHAPTER III

IN AND OUT OF WORK

NO more school . . . !
The end had come so suddenly that, although I turned the thought over and over in my mind as I turned my steps towards home, it still did not seem real to me. I even muttered to myself, aloud: 'No more school! No more school!' But still my brain did not seem to register it.

Actually I am not sure even now whether I was pleased or not. I told myself that I was now no longer a mere schoolboy, but a MAN. That I could now go out to work, do a man's job, and help my parents with what I earned. But, somehow, I could not convince myself.

Presently, as I walked along, my eye lighted on a plant which was unfamiliar to me. I immediately plucked it, knowing the interest my schoolmaster took in botany, how eagerly he would seek to identify it, and how pleased he would be with me for bringing it to him. Then suddenly that thought returned to me: 'No more school!' I would not be able to show him the plant! A dozen times the same state of mind recurred to me as I walked home. At one minute I would forget that life had suddenly come to the cross-roads, and I would go on thinking in the usual way, school looming large in all my thoughts. I would think of something I had meant to tell Jack Wilson. 'Never mind. I'll tell him in the morning,' I would say to myself, thinking of the opportunity for conversation which came between

prayers and arithmetic lesson. Then I would realize again that in the morning I would be no longer a schoolboy, but a youth looking for a job !

That night, when the broth and the dumplings had been eaten and we sat on our stools round the fire in the gathering shadows, I broke the news to my parents.

They said little, after the manner of Scots folk, but for a long time they sat looking thoughtfully into the fire, my father with a calloused hand lying on each outspread knee ; my mother, with her features at thirty-five years old still bearing the same lovable tenderness which they had worn when she carried me in her arms to meet my father coming home from his work at Ayton Castle.

At last my father slowly shook his head, and I knew that any hopes I might have entertained of further schooling were fruitless. There were no scholarships in those days whereby a child of poor parents could win his way to a secondary school. In fact there were no secondary schools at all, and Dr. Rutherford's ' Seminary for Young Gentlemen ' at a fee of fifty pounds a year was not for the likes of me !

The only thing to do was to find work, and in spite of excellent teaching at my various schools, I was not particularly fitted for anything of importance as yet.

I was a sturdy youth of almost thirteen, with all the quiet shyness of the child who has been brought up in the country. I was tall for my age and spare in build, rather round-shouldered and knock-kneed. These defects in figure seemed to have corrected themselves as I grew up, as there was scarcely a trace left when I enlisted five years later. Had they persisted I would never have been a soldier. The knock-kneedness was so extreme that my mother sewed leather patches on my trousers inside each knee.

I smile to myself nowadays when I look back on my early hopes and aspirations and think to myself how differently my life has turned out and how many things undreamed of have befallen me in the course of it.

It seems strange that the lad who was once a chemist's errand-boy at a wage of half a crown a week should end his wage-earning days as Yeoman Gaoler in the Tower of London; but such is the way of fate.

Where, nowadays, I carry a gleaming axe to show that I am Yeoman Gaoler, the symbol of my trade in those days was a sweeping-brush. For, as errand boy to Mr. James Newton, I began my day by sweeping out the shop and the back premises. I took down the shutters at 8 a.m. and did not put them up again until eight in the evening or ten on Saturdays. All day long I was busy washing out empty bottles in the clean, antiseptic atmosphere of the back shop, or running along the street with a basket of medicine bottles on my arm. It was rather an adventure to me to be out in the street, knocking at this door and that, waiting in lazy curiosity to see the person who would open the door, anticipating the pleasure of the few words of gentle banter they always had for the shy chemist's boy, or the little gift which so many of them would have waiting for me. I had my meals with Mr. Newton in the little room above his shop where he lived, tended by an elder sister, and I was very happy in my work. For I had learned the secret which country life teaches to those who can learn—to be satisfied with very simple happinesses. It was enough for me to stand and watch Mr. Newton mixing the coloured liquids together, to ask him questions about his work, and to receive odd little bits of knowledge about medicines and their properties. Perhaps my greatest pleasure came from

studying the faces of the customers and listening to the comic tales they told Mr. Newton of their ailments.

I changed my broom for a baize apron in due course and became shop assistant to Mr. Boston, an ironmonger. My wage was five shillings a week, and for it I had to work long hours and trudge to and from my home in the darkness of early morning and late evening.

My father, too, with that restless urge for progress which was so characteristic of him, also changed his position about this time and became carter to the firm of Bowcs and Water, wholesale potato merchants on a large scale. To me, a boy in his early teens, my father moved in a world of romance and adventure, for he came home from his work of carting from the ships at the quayside with stories of sailors he had seen there talking in curious tongues—great blond Swedes with far-seeing eyes, and little, humorous Cockney men. All the smell and sound of the sea was in his stories and they stirred in me a desire for foreign lands which was to be satisfied sooner than I thought.

Colourful and romantic as my father's stories were, they could not compensate for the sordidness which another aspect of my life had brought to me and which cast an almost perpetual gloom over everything. I was living in a street the memory of which remains a nightmare. I recoiled in sick horror from the first sight of that noisome thoroughfare where we were to make our new home, for it was a dirty, cobble-stone-paved place full of noise and squalor, and on Saturday night it turned into a Bedlam, where drunken and quarrelsome neighbours made the night hideous. For years the memory of Pilgrim Street, Shieldfield, clouded my memory even when the scene had long been left behind and I was in far happier surroundings.

My fourteenth year brought yet another change, with useful prospects at last, for my father apprenticed me to a Mr. Simpson, Plumber and Gas Fitter, for seven years. This, I think, was the hardest of my youthful posts, for I had to work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with only half an hour for breakfast at eight and an hour for lunch at twelve o'clock. I worked six days a week without holiday, for the weekly half-day for shop-workers was unheard of in those days. My wages were small at first, but I was promised that my two shillings and sixpence a week should be increased to five shillings in the following year, and correspondingly in the future years.

I began my first apprenticeship with definite hope for the future—but it was soon to be wrecked, for my employer died in 1876 and once more I was out of work, for my contract was rendered invalid by his death.

Not long afterwards I made another venture, this time under the North Eastern Railway Company at the Central Station. My wages were now ten shillings weekly, but that seemed inadequate to a growing youth, and I soon found better-paid work in the Railway Company's Goods Station, checking 'Way bills'—lists of the stuff coming in or going out. I found the work more congenial than any I had done yet, for it gave me a sense of responsibility which I had never felt previously.

But for all my eagerness to make real progress and get on in the world, Fate was determined to step in and prevent, or at any rate delay it, as much as possible.

My new work entailed a great deal of climbing in and out of goods-wagons, and, like most youngsters, I was not too careful how I did it. The result was that one day, poised on the buffer of a wagon, I slipped and fell on to the metals below, with my right arm bent under me.

It was extremely painful, and I thought that I had really injured myself seriously. However, the station doctor, after pulling me about a good deal, announced that there was no fracture, but that I should have to go on the sick-list and remain at home until I could use my arm properly once more.

That kept me in bed for several weeks, unable to move, yet praying that I would soon be in a fit state to return to my duties.

My health returned—but only, it seemed, that I might be fit to receive another blow. I walked into the station full of eagerness to begin work again. I walked out again ten minutes later, unemployed. The Goods Station superintendent refused to have me back, saying that I had been careless and that it was dangerous to myself and them to have me about the place.

Moreover, and this was an even more serious blow, they would give me no recommendations to a future employer.

My affairs were now in a sad state and all my Scottish pride felt wounded to think that I should be a burden on my parents who could ill afford to support a great lad of my size, and by now seventeen years of age. There was no unemployment relief in those days, and there was a stigma about being out of work which drove me almost to desperation. For months I wandered the streets of Newcastle, vainly seeking work and knowing that without a reference it would be well-nigh impossible. Unemployment was just as bad in those days as it is to-day, though no statistics were collected and no relief afforded, so that it was less talked about and less realized.

For months I lived in enforced idleness, hating it bitterly, for, from my earliest years I had been trained to work, helping my father in the garden or stables, or my mother in the house, and the realization of the burden I was to my parents preyed on

my mind so persistently that I was too miserable to settle down to the reading and study I had never before had time for.

Like a flash the solution of my difficulties came to me. It was in the middle of the night when my family were asleep and I lay awake, brooding over my plight and turning over and over all the possibilities. Each one I had to reject either because I had investigated it before, or because my lack of a reference was bound to debar me. Suddenly, as my mind ranged over the failures of the day, all the places where I had sought employment and been refused, I remembered a figure strolling along the street. He was a soldier. With all the strength of that lightning decision that comes to a man only a few times in his life, my mind was made up.

I, too, would be a soldier.

CHAPTER IV

‘WHEN I FIRST PUT THIS UNIFORM ON . . .’

THE idea of enlisting in the Regular Army had occurred to me before, for I had already some experience of matters military.

In the June of 1876, when I was nearly seventeen years of age, I had joined the local volunteers. I cannot pretend that I did so with any particular patriotic motive, actually I joined rather with the idea of finding some outlet for my physical energies, and also with the idea of being able to meet and mix with other lads of my own age and tastes.

The modern Territorial (successor to the old Volunteer) would doubtless smile could he see our little armoury, consisting of one of three small rooms over a grocer's shop, or our Drill Hall on the floor of the Corn Exchange in the Bigge Market. It was all very different from his up-to-date and efficient buildings and equipment of to-day. But we, of the 1st Newcastle Volunteers Rifle Corps, were mighty proud of our uniforms, equipment, and traditions.

The corps had been in existence since 1860, my birth year, when there had been a revival in the idea of instructing men in local defence, which had fallen into abeyance since the laying of the Napoleonic bogey. But when I joined there was no threat of war in the air. The whole world was at peace, and seemed likely to remain in that blissful state for an indefinite period.

Nevertheless we felt very proud of ourselves when we marched out in our dark green uniforms, with

our bayoneted Snider rifles at the 'slope.' And I daresay we were quite an impressive sight, though actually we were the rawest amateurs at soldiering, the only professional soldier amongst us being Robert Bradley, our sergeant-instructor.

I can still see him in my mind's eye—a sturdy, grizzled old warrior, drilling us like a martinet, and after drill was over, talking to us with an eloquence and enthusiasm which fired us all—even if only for a moment.

One particular Saturday afternoon is deeply impressed on my memory, for it was the day following the night when I had made my momentous decision to join the Regular Army. I had mentioned my decision to a fellow-volunteer, one William Norman, and to my delight he had expressed his readiness to follow my example.

When we informed Bradley of our intention his face literally beamed, but when Norman and I mentioned the regiments of our choice, its expression changed. Norman had said he wanted to join the Foot Guards, while I had expressed a preference for a Highland regiment.

When he heard this, Bradley's expression changed to one of jeering mockery, and as he expressed his opinion of our choice, our preference, each for our particular regiment, seemed to trickle out of the heels of our boots!

"Who wants to spend all his time shouldering a rifle on sentry-go at Buckingham Palace, or Windsor Castle? You don't call that soldiering, do you? A life of starch and pipe-clay and parading up and down with never a sight of foreign lands? And as for the bare —— Jocks, why half of them can't speak English! Have you ever worn a kilt, Fraser? No! Then don't get silly ideas into your heads, either of you. There's only one regiment for you, my lads, and that's my old one—the Fifth Northumberland

Fusiliers. Finest regiment in the British Army. See their roll of Battle Honours. No regiment has a longer one, nor a better reputation extending over years and years. It's the Fifth Fusiliers for you, my boys, and I'll not take 'No.' Your names are going down this very minute, and good luck to you both."

There and then our future was settled. The canny old sergeant did not intend to let us out of his sight till we were finally bound, and he bore us off at once to a Justice of the Peace, in whose presence we made an oath to serve Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, for a period of twelve years.

All the same I owe Robert Bradley a debt which I can never repay, for he started me on a path which I was destined to follow joyfully for the twenty-five years following!

I had burned my boats, and no sooner was the oath taken than misgivings assailed me. How was I ever to face my parents? The blood beat in my temples, and I saw nothing of the things about me as I walked home. It was when I reached the door of the house that the full horror of the situation struck me, and I walked indoors full of trepidation lest my father should be in. For I did not feel I had sufficient strength that day to break the news to both of them.

My mother sat at her knitting which seemed to be perpetually in her hands. She looked up with her usual quiet smile of greeting, and began at once to set out my tea. I waited for a few minutes, not knowing how to break the news. Then, suddenly I blurted it out. To my surprise my mother took the news calmly, but she was always placid and quiet, and even the greatest excitement did not move her either to anger or surprise. I think I had unconsciously given her the idea before.

Not so my father. Never have I seen a man so infuriated. To him my step was a blow from which he thought he would never recover, for it meant disgrace of the worst type. His son a soldier! He could not believe his ears. Rather would he have had me out of work for the rest of my life than earning my living in such a manner. More than that, he would rather see me in my grave, and he would certainly never have me in his house again in any circumstances.

To give him his due, he was only acting in accordance with the ideas of his times. There was a curious belief in those days that a soldier's life was degrading, and to a certain extent that belief survives even now. No greater mistake was ever made. There are fine men in the British Army, as fine men as in any profession, and I cannot find any explanation for this queer prejudice.

My father's wrath was softened a little by my mother's persuasions, and I was not forced to leave home in disgrace that day. The following Monday I was pronounced fit by the doctor at the local barracks and took steamer for London *en route* for Chatham.

London . . . ! My feelings on entering the great city were almost indescribable, for I had spent almost the whole of my life in rural surroundings, and this new experience was an adventure, a romance, a revelation, and an education to me. I had been granted a precious three days in the city before I must take train for Chatham, and I resolved to spend them in a gluttonous feast of exploration. But, for a time, I was content merely to watch the pageantry of the streets. I stood gazing up at the immense façades of buildings feeling rather like a telescope that is being closed, or a balloon being deflated, as my own importance, which had hitherto measured itself against one-storied cottages, shrank among

such immensities. At home I had walked the streets often being the only person on the pavement, but in London I was but the merest speck in a seething mass of humanity. At home every one would speak to me—a journey down the street would involve at least a dozen ‘good morning’s’ and perhaps half a dozen stops for conversation with various acquaintances. Had there been someone in the street who was new to the place I would have looked at him with curiosity, wondering who he was, and where he came from, and how soon it would be before he and I would be on speaking terms with each other. But here the street was full of people, three and four abreast touching each other as they walked, yet all strangers. No one said good morning to me, no one noticed me or thought: ‘Ha! A stranger. Who is he, and why does he come here?’ They all passed on, each concerned with his own business.

But London was too big, even sixty years ago, for me to be able to think of myself for long. Every second, every minute, someone new passed me—people as numerous and varied as the rats the Pied Piper led to the river.

Some of our soldier party had more concrete plans than aimless walking, and by a trick of Fate the first place they chose to visit was the Tower of London. Little did I dream as I gazed at its old stone walls and pleasant lawns that it was one day to be my home.

Our party did not roam the Tower without guidance as many modern visitors do, but was conducted by a ‘beefeater’; a bearded old gentleman whose tales enthralled me. There were some differences in those days—the interior of St. Peter’s Church was being altered, and some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century armour was wrongly labelled as belonging to the kings of England from William the Conqueror to George III.

My visit to the gallery at the Lyceum was yet another large thrill. I shall never forget my delight at seeing Sir Henry Irving, then forty years of age, as I saw him that day in *The Lyons Mail*.

I went out after the performance into the streets with their incessant roar, with the continual clip-clop of horses' hoofs and the rattle of iron-rimmed wheels clattering over granite setts in the pavement of the main streets and cobble-stones in the lesser. Above were the flickering lights of gas-lamps, for of course the London of my youth could not boast a single electric sign and to walk along the badly lit streets was a much more risky venture than it is to-day.

I passed along Fleet Street, where Temple Bar was still standing, barring the way from Fleet Street and the City to the Strand and the West. London in those days was a city just beginning to be stirred into a consciousness of the coming of a mechanical age. The Underground Inner Circle was running, but the stations were dark and dirty, the engines used steam and the atmosphere was thick with smoke. To me, in those days, a journey on a train underground was a wonderful experience and I did not grumble that the trains were inordinately slow and could not stop within fifty yards of a given point. The vacuum brake, electric power and light were still to come.

Our three days in London were all too short, but we did not mourn that fact unduly, for ahead lay Chatham and our first introduction to the British Army.

The story of Norman, my fellow recruit, is one of the mysteries which have puzzled me for years. I have thought about him often, for he was my companion as a recruit volunteer in Newcastle, in London, and in my venture as a soldier. Yet, but for one brief message, I have never heard of him

from the time he joined G Company until almost the present day.

We reached Chatham together, but I was posted to Company F. A month after our joining I heard that Norman had deserted. Fifty-eight years went by with never a word of Norman and I began to think that he was either dead or had completely forgotten me.

Then, one afternoon in 1935, I returned to the Tower from some little expedition outside the walls to learn that a visitor had called for me. He was, they said, a prosperous-looking old gentleman, and well preserved. He had given his name as William Norman, but had not left any message or given his address.

I have never heard of him since.

CHAPTER V

ALL FOR A SHILLING A DAY!

‘**T**HERE are twenty men asleep in this darkness,’ I thought to myself as I lay in my narrow iron cot in the barrack-room. ‘Twenty men who are to be my companions for the next six years. One of them will be a friend to me, perhaps more than one. With these men, whom I have scarcely seen as yet, I am to spend almost every moment, sleeping and waking, yarning and fighting, eating and drinking, suffering and laughing—for six years.’

It was 4 a.m. on the first morning of my life as a soldier, and I lay awake in expectation, mixed with a little fear, straining my eyes to make out my surroundings in the darkness.

Day came at last. I saw the early sun’s rays as here and there they picked out a corner of the wall and illumined the face of some sleeper. Anxiously I searched it, wishing to judge something of the nature of the men with whom my lot was cast. They were all complete strangers, bearing in their features either the rugged solidity of North Countrymen, or that touch of wild recklessness which is characteristic of the Irishman.

I had heard stories of the friendships which began in the barrack-room and lasted a lifetime ; of clean, loyal companions with whom one might go through life sharing one’s troubles and good fortune, of the spirit of comradeship and harmony which could transform the coldness of the barrack-room into a

union of common interests and happiness. All these I had heard of from Sergeant Robert Bradley, and now I lay, in almost breathless eagerness, waiting for 'Reveille' to sound, and give me the chance to make my first acquaintance with these men with whom I was to be so closely united for so many years of my life.

For an hour or so I studied the scene, taking in all its bare cleanliness and order and staring at the faces of the sleeping men in a vain effort to gauge the characters of my barrack-room mates before the quiet of my contemplation was shattered by a bugle note from the barrack square. It was 'Reveille' at 5.30 a.m. Men stirred vaguely and turned their faces again to the pillows until a raucous cheerful shout came from the corporal in charge of the room. "Come on, boys, turn out. Show a leg there, show a leg!"

I turned out with the rest to wash, dress, and make my bed before early morning drill at 6.20. That being over, I had my first army breakfast—a basin of tea and a ration of bread. I might have improved my fare with a pennyworth of butter from the grocery bar, but there was nothing else. I did not feel able to indulge in such luxuries very often for I earned but a shilling a day and that was reduced to eightpence halfpenny after the payment of our small rations and laundry bills, and the purchase of pipe-clay and cleaning materials meant less still.

The pay of a private soldier was one shilling a day, paid weekly, with a monthly final settlement. Compulsory deductions amounted to threepence for food, 'small rations' necessary to supplement the $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. meat and 1 lb. bread issued free by the Government; halfpenny a day for washing shirt, towel, and socks once a week; also threepence for hair-cutting by the company barber, one of the men, and a penny library sub. per month. As the kit issued on joining

from the Quartermaster's stores needed renewing, the necessary articles were supplied from the same source but on payment. 'Barrack damages' too, might amount to fourpence or sixpence a month. At the most a man would get a pound net each month. Out of that sum had to come any wants, amusements, expenses, or what not. But it was far more money than I, for one, and probably most of us, had ever had at our own disposal.

One of the few respites of the day came after breakfast when we were free for a short interval to idle over our smoking before setting to work on our general tidying of the room before the forenoon drill at ten o'clock.

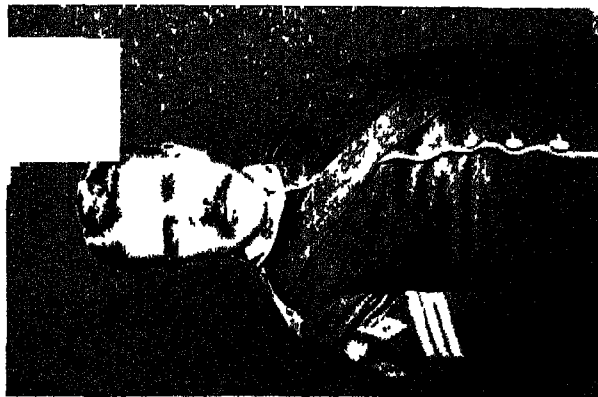
I can never think of this drill without remembering a very colourful man whose teachings were not only instructive, but highly entertaining to us.

This was Lance-Sergeant 'Sloper' Burns, a man of forty, who was our senior recruit drill instructor, who prepared the oldest squad for their final passing out by the adjutant. Sloper had seen twenty years' service and yet could neither read nor write. He had managed somehow, I think by asking a friend to read the drill book out to him and memorizing it with great care, to get the drill book rules into his head, and so, in spite of his illiteracy he was able to give his lessons with confidence. He had managed to become a corporal in 1864 when the regulations regarding educational standards in the Army were less stringent than in my time, and he had no desire to climb farther up the ladder of promotion to a position which would entail the writing of reports or the keeping of books. Four hours a day for a month he drilled the oldest squad and polished them into finished soldiers. Recruits' drill in the younger squads would take three months. I was four months a recruit.

Drilling under 'Sloper' Burns was exhilarating



JOHN FRASER, 1886



DONALD MUNRO, 1883



SANDY FRASER, 1896



THE CRACK SHOTS OF THE BATTALION, 1888
Corpl. Macnamara, the original of Kipling's Mulvaney, is second from left in Front Row. John Fraser, second from left in Second Row. Capt. Pennington in centre. Bandmaster Wallace on his left.

work, for he was full of cheerful repartee which was always to the point, and his language had, by years of practice, become rich and colourful. Most of it cannot be repeated, for it was usually indecent if not obscene. But while the old fellow's coarseness glanced off us like water off a duck's back, the knowledge he gave us from his infinite store sank into our minds ineradicably, so that it became an automatic part of us.

His speciality was Regimental History, much of which he invented. Nevertheless, he abjured us, by all the picturesque oaths at his command never to forget what he told us.

"By all the goats in Kerry, and that's a hairy oath, if ever wan o' ye forgit what Oi've been after tellin' ye an' let yer ridgiment or me down by yer dirty ill doin', Oi'll git to hear av it if Oi'm in my grave! An' Oi'll come up out of ut an' baste yer — till yez'll be dead."

One of the most curious experiences of barrack life, and one which had more than a touch of incongruity in it, was School Parade, between 3.15 and 4.15 daily. Even to this day I recall vividly the picture of Paddy O'Toole, a great shockheaded Irishman, with his face bent over his reading book, spelling out his A.B.C. For two years he laboured away humbly at his lessons, for like many of the older men who had not had my opportunities, he was totally illiterate, and could neither write his name nor read a single word. At the end of his two years learning Paddy managed to pass his third-class examination—which a modern child of ten could easily master. Persevering, with all the cheerful determination which was so characteristic of him, he achieved a second class, which was equivalent to a school-leaving certificate. He was then eligible for promotion to sergeant and colour-sergeant, for by that time Army regulations would

not allow the promotion of illiterate men, and those who knew Paddy and realized his worth had urged him to overcome his ignorance and try for promotion.

Paddy was typical of many soldiers of the time, who, mature in every other way, had to submit to the ignominy of kindergarten schooling in order to retain or improve his position in the Army.

I was never forced to take part in it, for on joining my regiment I was examined and at the next exam. in October, obtained a second class.

Those of us who were not forced to go to school were free to do as we liked. Being keen soldiers, always anxious to keep up the honour of the regiment, and to vie with each other in smartness, we generally spent our time in 'soldiering'—that is cleaning up and getting our accoutrements ready for the next day. These preparations included polishing buckles and buttons and applying pipe-clay to belts and straps, etc.

At four o'clock came tea, which consisted of a basin of tea and a quarter of a pound of bread, and after that we had complete freedom to do what we liked. Most of the men went to the canteen which was open from six till nine. They sat there at tables and drank beer at fourpence a quart, and yarned with that ease and colour which is so often found in companies of men bound together by propinquity and similarity of occupation. Occasionally, after a good deal of good-natured chaff, one of us would go, half unwillingly, to the stage at the end of the room and sing a song. On the whole we behaved ourselves, for there was a sergeant or corporal always in the canteen to check irregularities of conduct.

We weren't restricted to the canteen for our fun, for non-drinkers might try the coffee-bar for 'door-steps,' buns and tobacco, or we might ramble into the grocery bar to replenish our stock of oddments—pipe-clay, matches, soap, and blacking.

My particular retreat was the library, where I was almost certain to find peace to write my letters home. There I would pore over the neatly written pages my father sent me. They were full of affection and trust. In one which I have kept till now, he says :

‘ You never know who is watching you and taking stock of your proceedings and conduct. But as long as you have the approval of your own conscience you need not be afraid nor care what anyone will say about you. But, my dear boy, I am not going to preach you a sermon. You know what is right and what is wrong. I am sure you will choose the right path and follow it independent of what anyone may think of you.’

I have still most of his letters after sixty years, together with one from my younger brother Sandy, who was so soon to follow in my footsteps and become a soldier, and some of my sisters’. In the library I would ramble among the two or three hundred books and carry off my choice to the barrack-room to read.

All the time I was conscious that beneath the atmosphere of contentment and good companionship which characterized the barrack-room, there was something else which threatened to drag me to degradation if I did not stand firm against it.

There begins, the moment a new recruit enters the barrack-room, a fight not so much with his own nature as against the tradition of the private in the British Army—the tradition, or more properly the custom, which says that you do either as the barrack-room has a habit of doing, or become labelled a prig. Few young men can bear to be labelled so, especially when the taunt is repeated again and again, unless they have some outside force whose pull is stronger than barrack-room custom. That restraining force was for me the memory of Charlotte

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At four o'clock came tea, which consisted of a basin of tea and a quarter of a pound of bread, and after that we had complete freedom to do what we liked. Most of the men went to the canteen which was open from six till nine. They sat there at tables and drank beer at fourpence a quart, and yarned with that ease and colour which is so often found in companies of men bound together by propinquity and similarity of occupation. Occasionally, after a good deal of good-natured chaff, one of us would go, half unwillingly, to the stage at the end of the room and sing a song. On the whole we behaved ourselves, for there was a sergeant or corporal always in the canteen to check irregularities of conduct.

We weren't restricted to the canteen for our fun, for non-drinkers might try the coffee-bar for 'door-steps,' buns and tobacco, or we might ramble into the grocery bar to replenish our stock of oddments—pipe-clay, matches, soap, and blacking.

My particular retreat was the library, where I was almost certain to find peace to write my letters home. There I would pore over the neatly written pages my father sent me. They were full of affection and trust. In one which I have kept till now, he says :

‘ You never know who is watching you and taking stock of your proceedings and conduct. But as long as you have the approval of your own conscience you need not be afraid nor care what anyone will say about you. But, my dear boy, I am not going to preach you a sermon. You know what is right and what is wrong. I am sure you will choose the right path and follow it independent of what anyone may think of you.’

I have still most of his letters after sixty years, together with one from my younger brother Sandy, who was so soon to follow in my footsteps and become a soldier, and some of my sisters’. In the library I would ramble among the two or three hundred books and carry off my choice to the barrack-room to read.

All the time I was conscious that beneath the atmosphere of contentment and good companionship which characterized the barrack-room, there was something else which threatened to drag me to degradation if I did not stand firm against it.

There begins, the moment a new recruit enters the barrack-room, a fight not so much with his own nature as against the tradition of the private in the British Army—the tradition, or more properly the custom, which says that you do either as the barrack-room has a habit of doing, or become labelled a prig. Few young men can bear to be labelled so, especially when the taunt is repeated again and again, unless they have some outside force whose pull is stronger than barrack-room custom. That restraining force was for me the memory of Charlotte

Nicholson. Whenever Friday pay-night drew near, and others, even my best friends, tried to persuade me to go with them into the town and spend my money on prostitutes, the memory of her sweet, serious face rose before me and I knew that I could never go back to her unless I went clean.

Of all the influences which have affected my life, nothing has made a deeper and finer impression than the love of Charlotte Nicholson. For sixty years her memory has been with me, never for one moment dimmed or smirched. I have thanked her silently a thousand times in my life for the influence she had on me, for she was, in her quiet way, a power for such good as can hardly be estimated.

I met her first in June 1876, when we were both members of the choir in the Congregational Chapel in Gateshead. She was eighteen, and some might call her plain if they looked hastily. But to those who had time to dwell on her features there was a quiet dignity about them, a sweetness which had a far more lasting appeal than any flaunting beauty or mere sex allurements.

I began, quite simply, to walk home with her to the door of her mother's little shop after choir practice, and soon I was invited into the house to meet her mother. Almost imperceptibly the friendship grew until there were few evenings we did not spend together in the fading light of summer, wandering along the quiet country lanes. We stood many a minute, silently gazing into the clear bed of a stream, lost in our reveries, perhaps idly watching some prematurely brown leaf, curled exquisitely into a tiny boat, floating down the current. We lived then in a state of suspended happiness that was timeless and without place. For we were untouched by passion. We asked no more than to be together in tender, sensitive communion.

The nights lengthened and Charlotte was too

slight to fight the storms, so we sat indoors in the same sense of warm companionship. Her mother was there, too, looking rather like an older, slighter edition of Charlotte ; just as quiet and gentle a soul.

Sometimes at my mother's desire I took Charlotte to my own home where my mother was delighted with her. The two were always in harmony with each other and seemed to have a perfect understanding.

This pleasant companionship went on until I enlisted in July 1877. My departure was no surprise to Charlotte, for I had confided my ambition to be a soldier to her. There were no tears at our parting, no bitter reproaches. Quietly and earnestly Charlotte begged me over and over again not to forget her, and promised that she would always carry my memory with her. Every Sunday evening after I joined the Army I used to write to her and she replied with unfailing regularity. I knew that some day I would return to her and, as I have said, it was the memory of her clear innocence and strength of character that kept me on the straight path while other men yielded to the temptations of garrison town life.

Every time I was allowed home on furlough I saw Charlotte and our old companionship was renewed on the same lines. Three times I returned to Tyneside in this way, until, in December 1879 I took her the news that I was ordered out to India. Then, for the first time, we mentioned marriage, and I obtained her promise to become my wife on my return from the tropics. But Fate was to play me a strange trick which altered my plans entirely. This I shall recount in due course.

CHAPTER VI

PROMOTION AND GARRISON DUTY

I HAVE always been glad that Donald Munro got drunk on a certain May night two months before I joined the Army, for, even though I was not there nor even knew that such a person as Donald existed, his drunken escapade was to make a difference to my life. But for it he might always have been above my head on the ladder of promotion and I should never have known the finest friendship it could be any man's to experience. Donald Munro was to me as a man what Charlotte Nicholson was as a woman, and the memory of the two of them is cherished by me for my whole life.

When I first found my way into a barrack-room in July 1877, Donald was there, a man seven years my senior. Two months previously he had been a sergeant, now he was a private. The story of his reduction in rank is amusing, apart from the fact that it made our friendship possible, which it would not have been if he had retained his stripes.

Donald had become rather merry in his cups, he told me. Whether he really was drunk or whether it was merely that the civilian police said so, I do not know, but he was certainly sober enough to turn on the interfering policeman and chase him through the streets of Woolwich one evening in May. The policeman fled before Donald with a speed which was more frenzied than compatible with his policeman-like dignity, and Donald pursued him with glee as one who knows that every dog has

his day. Soon after the aggressive Scot found himself hauled before a court martial and reduced to the ranks.

From the first there was some mysterious, intangible bond between us. Perhaps, in the beginning, our friendship arose from the kindness of the old hand wishing to show the ropes to a raw recruit. At any rate Donald helped me in every possible way and in a short time we were inseparable, except that I could never be persuaded to join in his Friday evening orgies in the town. Eventually, instead of being converted to his way of amusement, he was converted to mine, and he ceased his week-end sprees.

It was through Donald's friendship that I received my first promotion. It took place in rather curious circumstances. I came off guard one day early in January 1878, had dinner and 'made down' my bed. As I lay in it with my eyes closed in a state bordering on sleep the colour-sergeant entered the barrack-room on a tour of inspection. He was a stranger to us, having been newly promoted, and Donald Munro, who had risen to be lance-corporal again, was with him to help him in taking over. I shall always remember the way they stood by my bed and how I was aroused into wakefulness by hearing Donald mention my name. I did not stir while he talked on, telling Sergeant Bright my story—he said that I was a well-educated, well-behaved, smart young fellow, just the one for the appointment to the position of lance-corporal for which there were two vacancies. Donald's words filled me with a warm glow of gratefulness, but I thought no more of their import and fell asleep.

The following day, 7 January 1878, was my birthday, and the best birthday present I had was the intimation that I had been appointed lance-corporal. I was eighteen and my army career had begun to progress!

No more 'sentry go' or scrubbing floors or carrying coal-boxes! I carried my head high now, for I was a non-commissioned officer! At last I would be able to right myself in the eyes of my father. For months I had worried over his disapproval, for I had the highest opinion of him coupled with the greatest regard.

I wrote at once to acquaint him with the news and his reply filled me with pleasure. It was typical of his fine character and begged me to forget his angry words, for he took them all back. I was delighted to have the breach healed and family relations restored to their old happy status of confidence and trust. I owed my promotion on that occasion to the good fellowship of Donald Munro. He was to remain my steadfast friend for the whole of my army life and afterwards.

I spent my first furlough in January and February 1878 as a lance-corporal, at home in Gateshead. Charlotte and I resumed our old happy companionship, as if nothing had come between us. My father and mother were more than pleased to see that six months of army life had put quite a different way into my hitherto shy manner. My father had entirely recovered from his early disappointment, and was very congratulatory, and would often talk of the need for a sense of duty.

I returned to duty at the end of February and for the next six months as lance-corporal went through the grind that falls to the lot of any young 'non-com.' A very busy life. Too tedious and commonplace to describe. On 1 August that year, 1878, I was promoted corporal, after six months only as 'lance-jack,' that under ordinary circumstances would have been three years about. But I had come under very extraordinary times, and without any exertion of my own, took full share of a rapid flow of promotion, caused in this way. My battalion, the 2nd,

had been re-created again for the umpteenth time, in 1857, and a very large number of the senior non-coms were going away to pension, twenty-one years after. Another reason was that our establishment of sergeants and corporals was increased by eight of each rank, when we were warned to prepare for active service against the Zulus in South Africa. We were not sent. The 2nd 24th (now South Wales Borderers) were sent from the neighbouring barracks, to take their share in the tragedy of Isandhlwara in the following January.

'Duty' as a full corporal is very much less of the 'fetch and carry' type than that of a 'lance-jack,' and means a good deal of responsibility in being put in actual command of small guards; and in carrying out of routine duties. Except in a general way, I do not recall anything worthy of record, except that perhaps another winter furlough of a month, this time over Christmas. Again at home in Gateshead and with Charlotte. In February 1879 I was promoted sergeant over the heads of some eight or ten corporals senior to myself, for no other reason than that I had a second-class educational certificate and they had not. We had a stiff old martinet for a C.O., Colonel Thomas Bigge, whose one idea was concurrence with the 'Queen's Regulations.' I was only nineteen, though my regimental age was two years more, thanks to Bob Bradley. I will not bore my readers with an attempt to describe the many duties and responsibilities that fall to the lot of a sergeant in an infantry regiment. But I will repeat the words of the sergeant-major, Thomson:

'Keep in mind that the discipline and smartness of the battalion depends on the way the sergeants carry out their duties, on and off duty. Be an example in smartness and behaviour. Do your duty fairly and be afraid of nobody.'

I joined the sergeants' mess, and instead of barrack-room meals and companionship, could spend spare time in a very well-appointed club, and sit down to dinner served at a well-appointed table. Donald Munro was ahead of me by a few weeks only, and so began all over again. Day by day the monotonous round went on. Guard convict picquet, drill. I had a little ill-health in the shape of rheumatics brought on, perhaps, by a strenuous week as battalion orderly sergeant, whose multifarious duties kept me 'on the go' from 'Reveille' till 'Tattoo' constantly, in a week of very bad weather. I was cured eventually by three days' sea-sickness during a trip to Berwick-on-Tweed with a draft of old hands for the Depot in a rotting old tub of a passenger steamer struggling against a stiff nor'easter. The only sickness I had in my service.

Later in the year, September, we had definite orders to get ready for service in India, to embark on 1 January 1880. I got a short furlough in December.

CHAPTER VII

REGIMENTAL HISTORY: THE FIGHTING FIFTH

BIT by bit, from tales told in the barrack-room and from the history books I read, I began to piece together the history of my regiment. As each new item added itself to the story I became enthralled by the heroism of it all, and proud to be one of such a regiment.

There were tales of collective heroism and almost incredible feats of valour, and there were others in which individuals stood out—men whose deeds have lived through the centuries and will continue to live so long as the Fifth remains a regiment.

The most striking of these stories in regimental history is concerned, strangely enough, with a woman, Phœbe Hessel, whose exploits are famous not only in her own regiment, but throughout the British Army. At the age of fifteen, this child of Stepney enlisted in the Fifth as a man. This was in 1728 when the regiment was expecting at any moment to begin a trip to the West Indies. Phœbe was not so much an Amazon as a very faithful lover, for she was determined not to be parted from her sweetheart, Samuel Golding, at any price, and he had gone ahead to the West Indies with his regiment, the 2nd Foot. The 2nd Foot and the Fifth were later sent out to Gibraltar together, where Samuel received serious injuries and was sent home to Plymouth. If Phœbe had been able to order her own destiny she would then and there have left the service, but even women soldiers must toe the line,

and it was some time before she could leave the Army and marry the Samuel she had been so faithful to. After twenty years the husband died and Phœbe, taught by happiness of years to be a staunch supporter of the married state, took to herself another husband. She married William Hessel, a fisherman of Brighton, who also died before her. Not being able to find a third husband, Phœbe found life rather boring. She was by this time about eighty and complained bitterly that everybody was dying off but herself. Her complaints evidently had no effect on her Maker, for she lived on until she was 108 years old when she was peacefully buried at Brighton. Her tombstone reads :

‘ She served for many years as a private soldier in the 5th Regiment of Foot in different parts of Europe, and in the year 1745 fought under the Duke of Cumberland at the battle of Fontenoy, where she received a bayonet wound in her arm. Her long life which commenced in the time of Queen Anne, extended to the reign of George IV, by whose munificence she received support in her latter days.’

Private James Grant was another gallant figure in the regimental past. He was not a soldier but a member of the band, and as such it was his place to keep well in the rear. That, to James, was rather an ignoble proceeding, and he plunged secretly into the fray on every possible occasion. When the fight was at its thickest he would abandon his instrument and creep towards the front lines, where he searched among the disabled for weapons not in use. Then he would fight like a fury, or like something from another world—indeed the whole story has something legendary in it. Just as the battle was nearing its end he would drop his arms and steal back to his place in the band and resumed his

playing with all the vigour of a satisfied man. Like other even more legendary heroes, James Grant seemed immune from all injury, for in the midst of the fiercest fights in the Peninsula Wars he escaped injury on every occasion. But, for all the romantic and seemingly unreal elements in his story, James Grant was as human as the rest of us and he finally met his death through a simple fall. As further proof of his reality there is the tomb erected to his memory by the Fifth.

It may seem strange that anything so wholeheartedly English as an English regiment should have begun abroad under the orders of a foreign king, but such was the case with the Fifth. It began its career in Holland. In 1674 Charles II disbanded part of his army, since war was over and he had no need of such large forces. But the men were not willing to give up soldiering so easily, and many of them went overseas to Holland where they knew that British soldiers were welcome as auxiliary troops. The formation of a British division was begun under William, Prince of Orange, one English, one Scots, and one Irish, later the 5th Foot.

Almost from the start they were distinguished for their valour and the sixteen battle honours on their colours stand for what they have done for their land during the past three hundred years. Their most famous honour is the word 'Wilhelmstahl' in honour of their valour at a battle of that name; another is the red and white plume which they alone have the right to wear. They won it at the battle of St. Lucie in 1778. Their badge and motto are among the oldest in the British Army, for it is St. George and the Dragon with the words 'Quo fata vocant.' They are extremely proud of this badge and no matter what obstacles rear themselves up, they maintain their custom of wearing red and

white roses on St. George's Day. Even when they are on foreign service in places as far distant as Africa, and India, their roses are sent to them, and all the usual customs are kept up.

The colour of their facings, too, is unique. 'Gosling Green' it is called and no other regiment may wear it. It is a colour carefully made by one particular firm and they have made it for hundreds of years.

You may think to yourselves that I am glorifying my own regiment at the expense of others. I have no wish to do so. If you would like to test the worthiness of my praise for it, read your Conan Doyle, or your Scott, for you will find in *Waverley* the romantic story of Charles Whitefoord, a colonel of the Fifth. Read your old schoolbooks with that poem you all know so well that you probably wrote rude parodies on it: 'The Burial of Sir John Moore, darkly, at dead of night'; he was also connected with the Fifth Fusiliers.

The story of their valour dates from the beginning of their history, when, one day in July 1676, two years after their formation, there was a sudden call to arms. For five days the troops marched, mystified as to their programme. Then, suddenly, they found themselves in the midst of the siege of the city of Maestricht. It seemed a forlorn hope, for the city was defended by 8000 of the finest soldiers and had fortifications of every possible kind. Nevertheless William's British soldiers flung themselves into the attack, and eventually won a temporary victory—but at what a cost! Of the 200 men chosen for the attack 150 were killed or wounded. Again, some days later the bastion was stormed, but the French blew up many of their attacks. There followed a ding-dong battle with the bastion now won by the English, now recaptured by the French. Then, the English came at them with renewed fury and drove

them out once more. But not for long. A careless sentry allowed 300 of the enemy troops to enter the city and capture the English guard. Immediately some of William's troops dashed forward and charged the bastion with greater fury than had yet been seen in the battle. So violently did they fight that finally the enemy fled, chased by the Britishers. Of the whole 300 only a score escaped.

William overwhelmed them with praise and gratitude, and since army fare at its best is not palatial, he presented them with a fat ox and six sheep for each of the three regiments. They hung their gifts on poles and displayed them proudly before eating them.

When it was all over it was found that the three British regiments had lost more than half their number during the siege.

Meanwhile trouble was brewing in England, and the Fifth began to foresee a journey across the Channel, for they were under an obligation to fight for their native country should its king demand their services. Charles II's mistress had presented him with a son, and though the King might have had reason to doubt his kinship with the boy, since the lady was partial to several of her many admirers, he chose to treat him as a prince of the Blood Royal, and had him made Duke of Monmouth. As might have been expected, the upstart claimed the throne after his presumed father's death, and it was to subdue him that James II brought the regiments to England. By the time they arrived—and they weren't exactly eager to do so—the rebellion was over, and they returned to Holland.

Events were soon to lead them into a permanent connection with England, for in 1688 William of Orange became King of England and took his three favourite regiments with him.

The Fifth did a good deal of travelling about this

time, for, after taking part in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, they were involved in the War of the Spanish Succession, in the defence of Gibraltar in 1727, and at Cherbourg in 1758. Canada, Buenos Aires, Portugal, Badajoz, Paris—they were there in all the fights, and each victory brought them some new honour.

It was in Canada that the Fifth especially distinguished themselves during the war between Great Britain and the American Colonies. The enemy had taken up a position on Bunker's Hill, and the Fifth were ordered to assail the heights. That was no easy task, for the hill was terrifically steep and the defenders of it poured down a rain of fire upon the attackers. Add to such difficulties the fact that the heat was almost more than the men could bear, and that each was encumbered with three days' food so that he carried a weight of fifty pounds on his back; then imagine him wading through grass which reached his knees, and climbing numerous walls and fences under heavy and skilful firing, and you will have some very inadequate idea of what the Fifth was up against.

Twice they were repulsed, only to return to the attack. Their physical powers seemed superhuman, their pluck unbelievable. At last, with a final desperate rush, they dislodged the enemy and occupied his position. Losses had been heavy and the Fifth, in spite of their victory, were not yet out of the wood. The army was blockaded, and without food. Its only hope seemed to lie in obtaining supplies from Britain, and it would be more than a week before they could arrive.

Then another blow fell. The food-ships were wrecked, and the soldiers found themselves faced with starvation, sickness, and death; growing weaker and weaker, while the enemy, well fed and without worries, advanced with renewed vigour.

Eventually there was nothing left to do but to evacuate.

Weary months followed for the Fifth, during which they suffered constant privation. But they proved their worth by showing that they were not only men to be depended on for valour in action, but also for endurance and fortitude out of it. The behaviour of the Fifth in this campaign is typical of other occasions on which they were conspicuous for their valour.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw Europe convulsed by war, and history was full of the glory of Nelson, Wellington, Sir John Moore, Napoleon, Blücher, and famous figures too numerous to mention. In 1805 the 1st battalion went out to defend Hanover. Two hundred and fifty of them were taken prisoner by the Dutch and suffered the most appalling privations. When they were released they were almost entirely without clothes. Their bones protruded, from the effects of starvation, their bodies were marked with the sores they had developed from living in damp and filthy ships. Maimed and in rags, they were a pitiful sight, and it took some time for them to recover.

In 1808 the Fifth joined the army of Wellington, then Sir Arthur Wellesley. 'Roliea' was their first battle honour, followed four days later by 'Vimiera.' In Spain the Fifth were involved in that action which is now world famous, whose story is on every schoolchild's lips: Corunna.

The 1st battalion had gone to Spain to help the natives against the French. For 400 miles they travelled at breakneck speed—only to find that their allies were gone. The enemy had been there before the Britishers could arrive and the allies were beaten. The Fifth began to retreat towards Corunna, a distance of 250 miles, and they were in a pitiable state. Their losses were terrible and included Sir

John Moore, one of the noblest leaders ever known. But their conduct had been exemplary, and yet another battle honour was added to their growing list—CORUNNA.

Honour after honour came to the regiment in the Peninsula War : Roliea, Vimiera, Corunna, Busaco, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vittoria, Nivelle, Orthes, Toulouse. And behind the gaining of each honour was some story of gallantry. Wellington praised them, and historians like Napier, the Marquis of Londonderry, and Alison had good words to say of them.

Major Patterson gave them what is possibly the highest praise, for it was not so much for their behaviour in battle as for their everyday conduct that he commended them. He says :

‘There is something in the appearance of many corps not easily defined, but which gives to the most inexperienced eye the impression that is usually understood among military men by the term “crack regiment.” This may be distinguished by an off-handed style of doing things, the smartness of their turn out, a neatness and particularity, even to the very polish of their buttons, a sharp lively step of confidence, a sort of pride in one another, expressed upon their countenance, all of which, both as regards the officers and men, immediately informs you, whatever it is, that their *tout ensemble* breathes the very life and essence of the soldier. So peculiarly are they characterized in this way, that even after the lapse of years, of many a hard campaign when you would suppose the rough usage of service would tarnish or break them down a little, they still retain the impress ; it seems associated with their number in your mind, beyond the possibility of erasure.

‘These regiments seem to be handed down as an heirloom from one clever officer to another. I scarcely ever knew an instance to the contrary. Perhaps none could be said to verify these remarks more strictly than the old Fifth, or Northumberlands (since made Fusiliers). There was an air of warlike spirit about them, retained from past experience, when, under Ridge, Mackenzie, Eames, Pratt, and many more, they preserved a reputation acquired in other fields. There was nothing lively in their uniforms, their facings being a muddy gosling green ; but notwithstanding this there could not be a cleaner regiment. When I knew them there were three Mackenzies in the corps, one of whom, a colonel, a remarkably fine officer, was killed at Corunna, the others, captain and subaltern of the Light Company, died in the West Indies.’

Of all the stories of my regiment, told me as I lay on my bed, by Donald Munro, none gave me a greater pride than the one I am about to recount. My pride was almost mingled with tears, for I felt that kinship with its heroes which is so noticeable a feature of the men of the Fifth.

Glory and tragedy and overwhelming grief came out of that battle which was to win for my regiment its greatest honour—Badajoz. Wellington himself declared on that occasion that the Fifth had saved his honour and gained him the town in the face of great odds. What greater man could have praised them ? And what greater praise could any man have given them ?

Later his exaltation turned to the deepest grief, when he learned at what cost the victory had been won. Colonel Ridge, the most gallant leader the regiment ever had, was dead in the thick of the fight. To me, and to all of us, the name of Ridge

was almost sacred. What must it have been, then, to the men who fought under him, and even to men above him such as Wellington? Napier wrote of him: 'Ridge fell, and no man died that night with more glory—yet many died and there was much glory.'

Badajoz must have seemed impregnable to the besiegers, for it was situated on the left bank of the River Guadiana and had the strongest possible fortifications. Protected on one side by the river, and with a castle crowning the top of the 120-foot hill, it was overlooked by another hill on which another fort had been built in such a way as to make the town seem safe from the most severe attacks. Shut up in the fort was a garrison of three thousand men with stores capable of lasting two months. The attackers' guns were obsolete and ineffective, but Wellington was determined to take the city and the fort on the hill. Twice the attackers stormed the fort, facing a rain of shells, stones, hand-grenades, and every conceivable missile. On each occasion the number of killed and wounded was more than half the total number of men taking part.

For the third time Wellington besieged the town under the most appalling conditions. The weather was unspeakably bad, and the besieged seemed to be lashed into a fury of violent resistance. Gunshot spattered incessantly, punctuated by the crash of gigantic stones falling on the attackers. Not a whit deterred, they fetched more ladders to mount the walls, and as they reached the top the defenders threw them backwards, many of them with bayonet wounds in their bodies.

For a long time the two sides were evenly matched. Then suddenly the attackers on one ladder went over the wall. It was Ridge who led them, for when the attack seemed hopeless he climbed the first ladder, imploring one of the bravest of his officers,

Ensign Canch, to lead the Fifth. Fired by his glorious example, the men rushed forward and nothing could withstand them. They swarmed over the ramparts and soon the castle fell. But Colonel Ridge had fallen also.

Those who heard of the escalade refused, at first, to believe in the English victory, for it had seemed incredible that the town should ever be taken.

Once inside the castle the fight continued—and when the dead were reckoned, five thousand officers and men of the Allied Army had fallen.

Says Napier :

‘ Let any man picture to himself this frightful carnage taking place in a space less than a hundred yards square. Let him consider that the slain died, not all suddenly, nor by one manner of death ; that some perished by steel, some by shot, some by water ; that some were crushed and mangled by heavy weights, some trampled upon, some dashed to atoms by the fiery explosions ; that for hours this destruction was endured without shrinking, and that the town was won at last. . . . No age, not any nation ever sent forth braver troops than those who stormed Badajoz.’

For several years the Fifth continued their European fighting, gaining yet more praise from the Iron Duke, and adding further triumphs to their honours. Then once more they were called upon to act with all their strength, this time in India, during the Mutiny.

The Fifth took part in the Relief of Arrah, performing their work so brilliantly that the Government of India and their Commander-in-Chief gave them high commendations. Their engagements culminated in the Relief of Lucknow. Imprisoned in that city, and treated with the utmost cruelty by the enemy,

were women and children who must be rescued at all hazards.

At Alumbagh, outside Lucknow, the enemy lay in wait; the Fifth approached through a marsh and under the fire of their batterics. Nevertheless they routed the Mutineers.

Lucknow was eventually relieved on 25 September, and even in the midst of their success there was another tragedy. Coming across a band of sepoys, the Fifth bayoneted them, and then discovered to their chagrin that they were not enemy troops but a band of loyal natives fighting on the British side.

The Relief of Lucknow, though a feat the importance of which is recognized by all, was but a step towards other encounters. Though British troops had succeeded in taking the city, they were not allowed by the enemy to leave it. The women and children were forced to stay, and the troops were further burdened by a number of sick and wounded, which was added to each day at an alarming rate. Luckily there was no shortage of food, though the quality and variety of it left much to be desired. The greatest source of trouble came from lack of clothing, for the men had been involved in a variety of experiences which had not only made their clothes dirty, but had caused every conceivable kind of damage to them. Had they been in merrier mood there might have been no limit to the jokes possible, but it is left for our generation, yarning on the veranda steps or in the quiet of the barrack-room when the rest are away, to smile as we conjure up pictures of the guard or picket dressed, for want of something more suitable, in a great coat made from a sumptuous Indian counterpane with a hole cut in the middle for the head. They found the Begum's silks, too, and dressed in them, for it was a modest age and a soldier did not exactly enjoy the thought of parading about the city in all his

nakedness. In their idle moments they investigated the various items of ladies' underwear they found in abandoned houses, and in the end were forced to wear such of them as could be adapted.

Relief came at last, for Sir Colin Campbell eventually arrived, and the women and children were removed from the city.

Their deeds in South Africa (the South African War of course, occurred twenty years after I joined) rivalled, for glory and excitement, those days of the Peninsula Wars described earlier in this chapter. When the Fifth began their part of the campaign two important British towns were in a state of isolation and siege and the invasion by the Boers in the West was meeting with a steady success. November wore on and the situation grew blacker. Half the battalion of the First Royal North Lancashire was shut up in Kimberley and Lord Methuen, with the Fifth, marched to its relief.

The British troops reached Belmont in the intense heat and bivouacked there. The enemy could be seen some miles away and Lord Methuen planned to attack them at dawn after a surprise march. Although the troops commenced their march in the middle of the night, their attack did not begin till daylight. They were in none too good a temper, for they had not breakfasted, and they made a dangerous charge. How bloodthirsty they were feeling is shown by the story of the Northumberland Fusilier who was annoyed by the movements of a too energetic staff officer who was riding up and down. Forgetting all respect due to a senior the North Countryman roared in his broad dialect: "Get thee to hell and let me fire!"

Seldom has there been a more furious fight. The opposing sides pumped lead into each other at a range of only 50 to 120 yards. Not only was the fight conspicuous for its collective gallantry, but

also for the self-sacrifice of individuals. Three men were shot dead while dressing the wounds of comrades. One man who was shot through the side, owed his life only to his watch, which stopped the bullet from entering his heart.

The battle was a complete success. After it Lord Methuen said to the troops :

‘ Comrades, I congratulate you on the complete success achieved by you this morning. The ground over which we have to fight presents exceptional difficulties, and we had as an enemy a past master in the tactics of mounted infantry. With troops such as you are a commander can have no fear as to the result. There is a sad side, and you and I are thinking as much of those who have died for the honour of their country and of those who are suffering, as we are thinking of our victory.’

The Fifth were at Magersfontein—but only as reserves. Their ordeal while waiting was probably worse than that of the fighters, for the heat was unendurable and made worse by dust and a plague of flies. Four days and nights they spent on the veldt, lashed by a ceaseless rain of a violent thunder-storm before their ordeal was over.

To me the greatest story of misfortune in the history of the Fifth is that of Stormberg, which town General Gatacre planned to surprise by a dawn attack with but a small force. Stormberg must be taken at any cost, and so far as any one could see, the cost was likely to be a great one. It was. No fight was ever dogged by a heavier chain of ill-luck and misfortune. The troops had to face a long night march across the veldt which left them feeling lifeless and unfit for battle.

But far worse than this was the fact that their guide lost his way. He was supposed to be leading

them towards the enemy, so the General decided that it was better to go on, even in the dark, than to retreat. But when dawn came the enemy was seen on a kopje about two miles distant. The men marched on intent of reaching the enemy, when, without the slightest warning, a shower of bullets came spattering over them. The Boers were hidden near by, in places which the troops found it almost impossible to reach, and the attempt to dislodge them was rendered almost futile by the lack of daylight. The artillery, unable to make out the enemy from their own infantry, killed many of our own men. Hopelessly the struggle continued until the General realized that nothing at all could be done. In despair the retreat began.

The slaughter had been terrible. There had been 702 casualties of which 399 were members of the Fifth.

That was almost the end of the Fifth's adventures in Africa. The next campaign of importance was the Great War of 1914 to 1918 when there were no fewer than fifty-two infantry battalions bearing the proud title of Northumberland Fusiliers. That was a far larger total of units than any other regiment could boast.

Such is the story of my regiment, and it is typical of the British Army. Most of us began as casual lads joining up because we had romantic ideas about soldiering, or for some special reason. . . . Often the reason was discreditable—a youth wished to escape from a village where his relationships were estranged, or from a home where he could not agree with his family. But if a lad is raw when he joins the Army, he soon loses both his gaucherie and his wildness, and obedience and duty become second nature. Not that Tommy Atkins is a creature without a backbone, a mere machine, which obeys orders. His spirit is never lacking at the right moment, for

he is a cheerful fellow, ready for any mischief that is afoot, with a song or a jest or a smart reply always on his lips. The land that produces him from among her so-called 'lower classes' should be proud of his manhood.

I have said so much about the Fifth Fusiliers, not because I believe them superior to all other regiments, but because I naturally heard more of their history than of any other. There are traditions just as quaint in other regiments—for instance, the 28th Gloucesters are distinguished by wearing a number plate on the back as well as the front of their helmets because in another battle in Egypt the regiment turned the rear rank about and fought both ways.

Perhaps the most comic of regimental traditions is that of the 11th Hussars, who were originally known as the Cherubims. But since they wear red breeches some wag rechristened them 'The Cherrybums.'

Almost every regiment and corps in the British Army has its history, its legends, and its traditions—and most of them are glorious!

But to me the Old Fifth is the most glorious of all, because I can paraphrase and say of it: 'This is my own, my native regiment. . . .'

CHAPTER VIII

‘ . . . AND INDIA’S CORAL STRAND . . . ’

THE reader will remember that we had been ordered to India.

If I had expected my parents to receive the news that I was going out to India with equanimity, I was doomed to disappointment. On this occasion even my mother was aroused to a pitch of protest such as I had never heard from her before.

“It’s absolute lunacy . . . ! You might as well go and commit suicide straightaway . . . ! Once in such a land of bloodthirsty atrocities you’ll carry your life in your hands, and we may as well give up hope of ever seeing you again ! ”

Such were the horrified comments my parents made when I told them the news.

It has to be remembered that the Indian Mutiny had only taken place some twenty years before, and was still fresh in the memory of everyone, so greatly had the world been shocked by the bloodshed and indescribable brutalities (though doubtless greatly magnified) which had characterized it.

But, worse perhaps than their horror of the natives, whom they regarded as an ungodly and barbarous horde of fiends, was their fear of disease, of which they had the most dreadful and hair-raising stories to tell. Everywhere in India, according to them, agonizing disease was rife, and hundreds of men dropped daily and died in their tracks !

Beyond a philosophical statement that the die was now cast, and that I should have to go, anyway—

unless I liked to incur the risk and disgrace of desertion—I could offer them little comfort. Truth to tell, I was not too easy in my own mind about it. I had always longed to travel, but I had not the slightest notion of what soldiering in India might mean—beyond the stories I had heard from some of the ‘old sweats,’ who delighted, of course, in putting the wind up a youngster. Wherefore those stories were not precisely comforting!

However, I did my best, and in the end our parting went off quite well—except that I was worried by my mother’s certainty that she would never see me again. Alas! neither she nor I dreamed that it was to be HER death, and not mine, that would justify her gloomy prophesies, and prevent our eventual reunion.

Only Charlotte was more cheerful, or pretended to be, and though she broke down during our last evening together, she was entirely hopeful of seeing me again, and promised to marry me on my return. How different our parting might have been had she realized that not three years, but seventeen, were to elapse before I should return to my own country!

I went back to Chatham after my brief leave and began to prepare for embarkation. Packing was a rather ruthless business, for unmarried soldiers were not allowed to take with them any goods other than those they could carry on their backs. I was lucky enough to be able to secrete a kit box which held some keepsakes, books, and underclothing. Besides our possessions we had to pack the quartermaster’s stores and the officers’ and sergeants’ mess property, officers’ and families’ baggage, and officers’ documentary belongings. They were all despatched on the 30th, with a fatigue party of fifty men to load them in the baggage rooms of the *Crocodile*. We were also given sea kit, suits of canvas, to wear on the voyage.

Dirty Chatham faded into the past as our two trains, filled entirely with Fusiliers, steamed out of the station to join H.M. Troopship *Crocodile*.

My feelings were rather mixed. I had never been away from my own island before, and now the step seemed frightening, because it cut me off so very decisively from all my former life. However, there it was—there was no looking back.

The trip was as bad, probably, as any you have read about in the most lurid of your excursions into popular fiction. And it took twice as long as it would do to-day. Beyond that I have nothing to say of it, for my whole mind was set on India which was to be my home for so long a period. On 4 February, thirty-five days after leaving Chatham, we reached Bombay.

As the *Crocodile* neared the new land we ought to have crowded on deck to catch our first glimpse of the shores. We ought to have become ecstatic with delight at the finest panorama in the world, for books say that only the Bay of Naples can rival it. But we were down below engaged on the baggage ‘fatigue.’

We did, at last, become conscious of our surroundings as the time came for us to disembark. But by then we were concentrating on the smell of India—that smell which is so characteristic that even a blindfolded man would know the country he was in if he had been there before. Then, suddenly, as we stepped ashore we were enveloped in the atmosphere of the place and fascinated by the brilliance of its colourings. The scene was kaleidoscopic and varied as the natives in their contrasting garments moved about with their sinewy legs bare to the knee, turbans twisted round brown heads, and teeth gleaming often in quick, ingenuous smiles. I turned my eyes from the colour and smell of the bazaars, with their bright medley of brass, ivory,

and ebony trinkets, their gleaming heaps of beads and bracelets, their piles of fruit, red, yellow, and green, to the European streets with their air of spaciousness and wealth.

Along the esplanade, and facing Back Bay, there stretches a great line of public offices, designed in a curious mixture of Gothic and Saracenic styles.

Towards the northern end of Malabar Hill I noticed the Parsee Towers of Silence, where the Parsees expose their dead until their flesh is devoured by the vultures, after which the bones are cast into a well, where they eventually crumble into dust.

On a raised strip of land was the Fort, which is the very keystone of Bombay's position.

I had but a confused glimpse of all this before I was taken up and whisked away from it in a train which took us through the Western Ghats to a station named Deolali, where we spent five days being equipped with uniform suitable for the climate—two suits of white cotton drill, one of khaki, and light underclothing. Being so clad, we were at liberty to begin our explorations of Indian life, and in spite of all we heard against it, we felt ourselves to be in clover—at least for a time. Each of us had a month's pay in hand, for we had spent nothing aboard ship.

What a time we had, spending our money in the bazaars, amused always by the tricks of the sellers, grasping and ingenious rogues that they were! Yet, for all their sharpness we bought many things incredibly cheaply—cake tobacco for twopence an ounce and cigars at a half-penny each. It was all like an unexpected and very exciting holiday to us, for there was no drill. One parade a day for inspection of rifles, belts, and uniforms, and for fitting new Indian uniform, was all we had to endure. There were no walls to climb to break out of barracks, and even if there had been, life would still have been

full of change compared with the boredom we had felt on board the *Crocodile*.

From Deolali we went in the night by troop-train to Jabalpur. Our stay there was uneventful—unlike that of some sightseers described in his book by Lord Baden-Powell who was in Jabalpur a year or two before us. The story is so unusual that I will repeat it for the benefit of those who have not read his book.

A party of sightseers had gone out in a boat to inspect the famous marble rocks of Jabalpur. Their arrival had been resented by the bees, which build their nests among the rocks, and an angry horde of insects appeared, determined to dismiss the visitors in their own effective way. The sightseers turned hurriedly and rowed frantically, hastening away from the rocks. The bees set off in pursuit, and the visitors were in such a state that they could not decide whether to use their arms to shield their faces or to manipulate their oars. For a time the oars thrashed the water in confusion, then one man decided that the only way to be free from the bees was to dive into the water. His example was followed by the rest of the party, but the solution was a very temporary one, for they could hardly stay under water for ever, and the bees renewed their attacks whenever a head appeared. This slapstick comedy became a tragedy in the end, for one man to whom the bees devoted particularly warm attentions, was drowned in his attempts to escape them.

From Jabalpur we went on to Agra, which was to be our home for the next three years. I did not get a chance to see the city until some days after our arrival, for all our attention was taken up with our duties at the barracks. As we moved in the other regiment moved out, leaving the place all ready for us, and so we were spared the additional

discomfort of finding the barracks empty with the stores to be drawn, beds to be filled, and a thousand and one other jobs to be done.

Spared such preliminaries we were soon at liberty to explore the new barracks. After Chatham they were a revelation. There was a certain nobility about them; a certain affinity in size and shape to a cathedral. One for each company. Long and wide and spacious, they were cut off in the middle by a transept-like messroom fitted with tables and forms where the whole company could sit down at table at one time. The two halves for sleeping accommodation consisted each of a long, high space, fifty feet to the roof and twenty feet wide, the walls interspersed with arches. The bare stone slabs of the floor added to the effect of cloistral coolness. The customary shelves, cots, and kit-boxes were fitted between each arch at the side. All this was down the centre of the room, while through the arches on either side was a corridor about fifteen feet wide with doors opposite the arches. Outside this was a veranda of the same width, supported by a row of pillars on the outer edge, and beyond this was a plinth of five steps running right round the building. Altogether, it was a harmonious building, the architecture of which gave an effect of nobility and dignity. Add to this, extreme cleanliness, for it was made of stone that was almost white in colour and was lime-washed inside once a year, and you will have some idea of the simple austerity of the place.

Nowhere was there anything to spoil its dignity. Latrines and wash-houses were well concealed at the back, and there was, of course, no smoke to spoil the cleanliness, for the warmth of the climate made fires unnecessary.

There were ten of these buildings, symmetrically arranged along a roadway, so that each might catch

the wind, and smaller buildings were of the same type, so as to preserve the effect of uniformity. They had been built about 1860, after the Indian Mutiny, and nothing could have been a greater contrast to the uninspired bareness of the usual home barracks.

If I found the barracks delightful, the town of Agra was a sheer joy !

I wandered along its streets, enraptured by the most perfect specimens of Mogul architecture in the world, and intrigued by the romantic history of the place. For it has been a fortress since the earliest times, when the Aryan stock settled in the plains and defended themselves against the hereditary freebooters from the highlands of the centre of India.

The earliest fort was an ancient stronghold which has defended the city for countless years. Then a king removed his court there and the little village became the capital of a kingdom. It was here the Koh-i-noor diamond was hidden.

The Sultan Baber, founder of the Mogul dynasty, had wrested the diamond from the forehead of the God Krishna, thereby earning the curse of the Hindu priest, which has apparently dogged every one who has owned the diamond since that time. It was this Baber who captured the city of Agra. Baber entrusted the diamond to his son Humayan and bade him to take it to his treasure-house at Agra. But the spell had already commenced to work, and Humayan had begun to covet the gem for himself. He plotted against his father and eventually his wicked plan was successful ; Baber was murdered by one of his son’s followers, and the diamond changed hands.

Akbar, his grandson, built a new fort with mighty walls of red sandstone. Soon, other buildings grew up—the red stone palace which is said to be the

finest example of Hindu architecture, and the Pearl Mosque—just as fine an example of the Moham-medan. The finest of all buildings in Agra, and reputed the finest in the world, is that famous memorial to a beautiful queen, the Taj Mahal. There is no need for me to describe it, for it must be familiar to every one. With my 'Brither Scot' as Donald Munro was christened by Lawrie, the hotel-keeper who so often invited us to dinner, I used to spend many of my evenings in the lovely gardens of the Taj Mahal when the moon was full.

The surrounding country was as dull as the city was romantic, for it was a vast expanse of dead flat plain made of rich bottomless silt brought down by the river. There was not the slightest rise anywhere to break the monotony of the surface, and only the knowledge that all the terror, mystery, and romance of the Himalayas lay beyond the horizon, made some compensation for a youth reared among the hills of Scotland. The roads were straight, with splendid metalled surfaces, thickly treed along the edges.

The hot season was creeping upon us, and soon after General Inspection we were helplessly involved in it. By 15 March when England was still shivering in the grip of winter, we were sweltering in our white clothes and performing our duties in a desultory fashion, feeling that even drill once a day, and that at 6.30 a.m., was more than ought to be expected of us!

And so, hour after hour I lay dazed by the heat and gazing up at the rhythmic swing of the punkahs, or at the stolid face of the native 'punkah-wallah' who pulled on the ropes from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and again from 9 p.m. till 5 a.m.

The doors, spaced along the windward side of the inner veranda, were alternately fitted with frames interlaced loosely with a sweet-smelling root called

‘Khus Khus,’ and these were kept moist by a native throwing water over them. One day, coming out of the hospital where I had been visiting two sick men, I remember coming across a trained hospital assistant reading the instruments of a small meteorological station kept on the hospital compound. His figures read 185 degrees in the sun and 135 in the shade. In the hospital ward, in spite of all efforts to cool the air, the thermometer stood at 117 degrees.

“Shave, Sahib?” A ‘Nappy’ came round the barrack-rooms in the early morning, and if we wished we were shaved for four annas (sixpence) a month. We felt like lords, for all the irksome tasks, the cooking, carrying of meals from the cookhouse, sweeping out of the rooms and verandas, and carrying water from the wells, was done for us by natives.

We fed fairly well, though a pound of meat a day was perhaps too heavy a ration in so hot a climate. We were not expected to be teetotal, either, though steps were taken to see that we had no more than our regulation allowance of a pint of beer and a dram of rum a day—on payment of the correct sum. The drink was supposed to be served in the presence of the N.C.O. on canteen duty from each company. He carried a list of names to be marked off as each man was served. The rum and beer was supplied in tin pots by the canteen sergeant and his two potmen, and the men settled down at the tables and benches in little groups and coteries of boozing chums who shared the cost together.

It might seem difficult for a man to get drunk on such a restricted allowance, but a craving for drink overcomes many obstacles, and the restrictions were easily evaded. On pay day and the few following days the canteen would be crowded, and a good many men would become completely drunk. Next

day there would be a guard-room full of drunks for the C.O. to dispose of. A man put under arrest for being drunk had to 'cool his coppers' at least twenty-four hours before being brought up on the charge. He was fined according to scale and received sentence of five, seven, or more days 'confined to barracks.' Drunkenness carried no slur with it in those days, either in the Army or in the street, and I remember many a man returning from a month's furlough and on being asked how he had enjoyed his leave, replying: "Champion, men. First class. Ah haven't been to bed sober since Ah've been away."

After all, what was there else for the soldier to do but drink? He had no sorrows to drown, but he had a good deal of spare time and practically nothing to do with it, and not being a particularly imaginative fellow, he spent most of his time in the canteen. Drunkenness was rather the fault of the authorities, who provided no alternative recreation for the Tommy in those days.

Out in India we sergeants had a merrier time than the privates. In the evenings we would forgather in our own club, the mess, where there was a dining-room, billiard-room, and refreshment bar. The atmosphere was inclined to become matrimonial once a month, for the ladies graced us with their presence then at a quadrille party. We entertained the wives and daughters of the civilian families living in the Civil Lines as the European quarters were known.

All the festivities of the year—the card parties, billiard handicaps, and smoking concerts—culminated in a great crescendo of excitement on St. George's Day, for then the regiment celebrated its connection with the patron saint in no mean fashion! After the 'Trooping the Colours' ceremony and sports, which were the regimental custom, the men

went off to their own jollifications in the canteen, and we gave a grand ball to which we invited all the officers and their friends—as many people as we could gather in and sometimes more. There was a splendid supper in the marquee, and we showed everybody in what manner the Fifth could do things.

CHAPTER IX

A SOLDIER ON PARNASSUS

WHAT I shall always regard as one of the most important days of my life—though it may sound strange to some to think of it in connection with a soldier—was that on which I was first introduced to the beauties of poetry, which opened for me the gates to a new world of glory and of sheer joy, a world as different from the one in which I passed my working days as is the cool green and gold of the country-side from the heat and dust of the great city.

Certainly it is a far cry from singing—or rather bellowing—‘Old King Cole’ in the canteen, to lying on one’s cot to read the delicate poems of Shelley, with all their dainty, ethereal beauty, so that anyone seeing me thus absorbed in *Prometheus Unbound* might well regard it as a strangely incongruous scene. Yet it is not so, really, for the swashbuckling stories and poems of action and adventure do not appeal to the adventurers and men of action so much as the unthinking would imagine. After all, most people read in order to get away from the realities of their normal lives, and so it is the clerk or the shopman who delights in tales of adventure, and the more spiritual matter that appeals to the man who, LIVING adventures, doesn’t need to read about them.

I owe my introduction to the slopes of Parnassus to a couple of my comrades, who were also to become my fast friends. These two were the brothers

Norton, Bob and Harry. And their 'strange, eventful history' as soldiers had begun some ten years before I made my first appearance on their stage.

They commenced their career as band-boys in the 26th, out in India. When they reached the age of eighteen they transferred to the ranks in order to be eligible for promotion. They were successful. After completing nine years of the twelve they were forced to serve, they decided that they liked army life so much that they re-engaged to complete twenty-one years. We had met at Chatham where Bob had come to my barrack-room as a corporal in Company D. We soon became firm friends and the friendship continued out in Agra, where Bob would come to my room away from the barrack-room noise to study algebra, mensuration and trigonometry, and cognate subjects, prior to going up for the entrance examination at the Roorkee Engineering College. His brother Harry often joined us. I, too, encouraged by their example, took up the studies I had abandoned when I left St. Thomas's School.

Bob and Harry were far away ahead of me, so I just followed in their tracks, making up for lost time, and being saved from the inevitable boredom which would otherwise have come from having nothing much to do. Surveying, geology, inorganic chemistry—all these subjects we studied; I as keen on their heels as a hound is on the scent. What a quiet sense of joy and harmony there was between us on our evenings together, when, for a time, we abandoned study, and Bob brought out his latest effort in poetry, for he could string rhymes with a skill far beyond the rest of us. He was a fair musician, too, and when the atmosphere was sympathetic to his performance, he would bring out his clarinet, and with his eyes dreamily fixed on the distant horizon, he would begin softly, thoughtfully, to play from memory.

But I see him best sitting on the steps of the veranda, with the cool white arches of the barrack-room behind him and the five smooth steps of the plinth below. A poetry book lay open on his knee and he would take the pipe out of his mouth for a minute to tap the page with it as he turned to me : " John, get this into your memory and there'll be less room for ordinary stuff."

' Science and poetry and thought
Are thy lamps. They make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene they curse it not.'

He had memorized long passages from many of the poems of his favourites, Shelley and Keats, including lengthy excerpts from *Prometheus* and *Adonais*.

For me, at that time, Keats' poem was true for these ' realms of gold,' those books and poems which I was discovering for the first time, were a new world, unexpected and glorious beyond dreams. I felt all the exaltation of ' some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken.'

' Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.'

I shall always be tremendously grateful to the brothers for awakening my latent and, till then, almost unsuspected love of poetry and, many times in my life, even to-day, looking out on Tower Green with the well-thumbed and yellow-leaved copy of Keats in my hand, I have thought of those two very good friends. It seemed strange then to find such a fine and sensitive love of culture in them, for they were the sons of a soldier whose wife had died when they were tiny children and they had been brought up at the Sanawar Orphanage. As soon as they were old enough, at fourteen, they

were claimed by their father's old regiment and spent four years in the uncongenial atmosphere of the band-boys' room. Throughout their lives they were the most devoted friends, sharing the same wants and aspirations, although Bob was eighteen months the senior of Harry.

In my life I give them a place among my finest memories—of St. Thomas's School choirmaster, Sergeant Bob Bradley, 'Sloper' Burns, and Donald Munro—for they helped me to what I regard as a very important step in my development.

Both of them passed the examination they were studying for, but only one of them could be promoted because there was only a single vacancy. Harry was married, so he got the first chance. But no sooner had he accepted the position than calamity overtook him, for, a few days before leaving for Roorkee he fell and badly injured his left knee. He was so anxious to carry out his plans that he said nothing of his injury, which became so bad that he had to report sick on his arrival, for he was scarcely able to walk. In two days the injury had been diagnosed as synovitis, and it was decided to amputate the leg above the knee.

That did not finish Harry's career as a soldier, for he recovered from the operation and obtained a good billet as a draughtsman to the Chief Engineer in the Meerut district, where I stayed with him in 1889. Poor Bob went to the college the following year, 1882, where he died of cholera a year after.

My last memory of Bob Norton is seeing him, bent over his engineering tasks and of hearing him quoting :

' We look before and after,
And pine for what is naught :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught :
Our sweetest songs are those that
Tell of saddest thought.'

CHAPTER X

GOOD HUNTING !

WAS the Indian sunshine eternal ? I really began to think so during the long months which followed my arrival in India. Five fine months passed with never a sign of a shower. I began to heartily loathe the heat, and to have an intense longing for rain, largely due, I expect, to the fact that I had been born on the borders of the moorlands, where clouds gathered often, and this harsh land without rain was hateful to me. Day after day I looked at the heat haze in the sky and the bareness of the fields, anxious for the rain that never came.

It was the first week in July and there was an easterly wind, dusty and dry and unceasing. So steadily and constantly had it blown that I was driven almost to desperation, and well-nigh blinded by the clouds of dust which served to aggravate the intense heat. This dust was everywhere, like a veritable sandstorm, penetrating everything—clothes, food, bed, eyes, and even getting under the finger-nails. The ground was parched and dusty and the 'Bhisti' or water-carrier, with his goatskin on his back, was kept busy filling his 'mussuk' at the well and sprinkling the ground. Only on the trees was there any sign of herbage, for every vestige of grass had dried up long ago, and the only sign of green was one small cricket pitch kept moist by daily waterings. Here and there, in brilliant contrast to the brown of the earth, were small patches of

colour where those who could afford a 'Mali' to do their gardening and could keep a runlet going during the hot season, could have four crops of roses a year.

At last we had a change from the monotonous east wind, and the south-west wind that followed it brought clouds. But all day the sultry heat continued, while we lay listlessly about. Then, with a deafening crash of thunder the storm broke.

Never had I heard such thunder, nor seen such lightning ! The volume of rain that fell was terrific also in comparison with anything I had previously known. Considering the fact that parts of India have 500 inches of rain in the monsoon season, and that the rainfall in England averages about 40 inches yearly in my own part of the country, my surprise is not to be wondered at.

In some ways the monsoons brought relief, and there was less trouble from prickly heat, that irritating complaint so common in the hotter climates. But in others there were troubles of many kinds. The air was continually damp. A plague of winged and crawling things which seemed to appear from nowhere came to add to all our torments. Flying ants appeared in millions, bunched in revolting heaps at night in the lamplight, so that we had to remove the lamps to the outer verandas and sit in the darkness, painfully conscious of the teeming life beyond us. There was also a horrible stench from what we called flying bugs, which came in numbers innumerable, as though some evil spell had created them. Dormant frogs which had lain, seemingly half-dead, in dried-up ponds, awoke to life and croaked in a hideous chorus. Mosquitoes were much more numerous, and seemed a thousand times more vicious. As a result, fever increased and men's spirits sank to their lowest ebb. Everyone suffered

from the listless inertia which made work almost impossible.

In this way we lived for three months before mid-October brought relief and a return to normal soldiering.

Resumption of the old life was pleasant by comparison, and we spent our time quite cheerfully at our drill, musketry, and field practice.

On 21 October our sister battalion, the 1st Fifth, passed through Agra on their way home to England after fifteen years' service in India. They had taken a part in the second Afghan War of 1878 to 1880, but had not had any connection with the famous march under Sir F. Roberts from Kabul to relieve Kandahar. Theirs had been the less showy but quite as arduous duty of keeping the frontier tribes quiet.

Some of them had been in India so long that they were caught in the country's spell and had no desire to go home. They came to us in a draft of two hundred and fifty men, most of whom had been sent out from Chatham in the years '77 and '78.

Our new Commanding Officer came to us for the same reason. He was Colonel T. Rowland, C.B., of the 1st Battalion, and he exchanged with Colonel T. Bigge of the 2nd Fifth.

Colonel Rowland was a great sportsman and he had ample opportunity of indulging his love for shooting parties in the jungle, one of the finest recreations available for officers. Polo and pig-sticking—as the most exciting of all sports is prosaically called—have been the salvation of many a young officer who might otherwise have ruined himself with drink and betting, because army life had no other outlet to offer him.

Of all sports, pig-sticking is surely the most thrilling and dangerous, for the boar is probably the wildest of all beasts and very formidable with

his great tusks and wedge-shaped head set on an amazingly strong neck. He is capable of galloping as fast as most horses, and of taking any obstacle that comes in his stride. He is entirely without fear, even of such animals as the tiger, and will attack and even best one, rending the flesh with his sharp tusks. He alone goes down to the pool to drink without fear of the other animals. He drinks without turning his head, except in curiosity, and ambles back quite unconcerned, while all the other animals drink erratically, starting nervously at every sound. When the officers of our regiment pursued a boar they usually went in parties of at least three or four, well mounted, and with long spears or lances as their weapons. They had to be prepared to fight the boar as well as pursuing him, for he is always liable to tire of the chase and to turn ferociously on his pursuers. Any hunter who cannot get his horse quickly out of the way runs great danger of being cast off his mount when the pig attacks it, and once on the ground is at the mercy of the beast's tusks.

Even when he gets the boar on the run, his task of getting near enough to implant the spear in him is by no means easy, for he invariably twists and turns violently to right and left and the horse, unless its rider can check it, darts past. When the pig fights, the whole of the party have to combine in repulsing him, some returning his thrusts, others protecting those who are in danger. The pig, if he is feeling aggressive, will charge from a great distance. No wonder pig-sticking is a sport which calls for great courage besides a high degree of skill and knowledge in the ways of the pig. To practised pig-stickers the most exciting part of the chase is the final spurt when all four riders race in competition to see which can be the first to spear the boar.

Pig-sticking was not for me, nor for any of the

lesser fry, but for many of us opportunities of other hunting were not rare, for there was plenty of uncultivated land, away from the villages, where ground game, hares, a small type of partridge, chicore, and other wild game abounded. There were neither game laws, nor close seasons, nor landed proprietors to turn one back. No hedges, fences, nor restrictions of any kind, and any of us were free, if we could get the necessary permission, to hunt in the district where and when we wished to. Usually a native offered his services as guide and interpreter, volunteering to show our men where game was most likely to be abundant in the open country. Only peacocks and monkeys must be left alone, for they were held sacred by the natives.

We went in parties of not less than three, one member of which must be able to speak the language if we had no interpreter, and one of which must also be able to dress any injuries which might be sustained. We were keen followers of the sport, for it offered not only excitement, but a good deal of liberty as well. We carried all our requisites on an *ekka* or native pony-trap, and for each two members of the party there was another trap if the distance was too great for us to walk.

Since Colonel Rowland was a sportsman himself, he readily granted sports leave to those who cared to apply for it, from Wednesday afternoon till Sunday night, and the sportsmen knew that so long as they kept away from native villages and ran no risk of interfering with native religion or custom, they were free to do as they liked. All the game in the land was available, for the natives, apart from the Mohammedans, did not eat meat and therefore did no shooting.

CHAPTER XI

SOLDIERING IN INDIA

HOW do soldiers in India spend their time when there is no fighting to do ? ' This is a question that has been very frequently put to me, and sometimes the seeker for information will add : ' It must be awfully difficult to keep them out of mischief in that climate.'

I suppose the answer to the latter is that to keep a good soldier out of mischief is always something of a problem, in India or elsewhere. But in India it is an easier task than in many countries, one reason being that during the hot weather there is very little superfluous energy to be worked off. And the answer to the former can be given in three words : ' Work, play, and sport ! '

As soon as the cooler weather sets in the troops get down to drill and training in earnest. In my day, and in my regiment, two companies at a time were told off for a fortnight's annual musketry course, marching out daily to the rifle range, which was situated on the plains, not far from the barracks. Two other companies were set to training and practice in ' field exercises '—outposts, skirmishing in attack-formation, preparing defensive positions, and all the practical technique of field warfare in India. The remainder of the companies were at the will and disposal of the Adjutant and the Sergeant-Major, who invariably kept them ' jumping to it ! '

One day a week was set aside for route-marching,

beginning by marching about eight miles into the country, along the metalled roads, in full kit and with the band leading them. This served the double purpose of getting the men used to marching, and also of impressing the natives with the military might of the British Raj. As time went on, the length of the marches was increased to fourteen miles until the troops were considered to be hardened to it.

We were not, of course, the only troops in Agra. There were also two batteries of British Field Artillery, and a couple of battalions of native infantry, all of us under the command of a Brigadier-General, who, of course, was constantly ordering brigade parades for inspection, drill, or tactical exercises.

The climate in India, at about the middle of November, is very similar to what it is (or perhaps I should say what it SHOULD be) in England at mid-summer, except that it is perfectly settled and consistent from day to day. That is perhaps one of the things that makes the tropical weather seem monotonous to the average Englishman—it lacks the strange, and sometimes rather startling, variety of our British climate.

Round about Christmas-time the *Chota* (or little) monsoon rains interrupt the even tenor of the weather, and when this is over the social programme, interrupted by the rains, is resumed.

In our time amateur theatricals were very popular. They were usually arranged by a young lieutenant named F. C. Carter, and were mostly in the nature of burlesques on famous plays and operas, ranging from *Ali-Baba and the Forty Thieves* to *Faust*. There was plenty of talent to be found amongst us, sometimes in very unexpected places, and a good deal of fun was caused by the fact that some female parts had to be played by men. I used to enjoy these shows quite a lot, and usually had a small part in them.

The original music was retained, and was played by a small orchestra selected from the regimental band, with the Bandmaster acting as conductor. But the librettos had many liberties taken with them, the singers being encouraged to gag to almost any extent on local topics and allusions, a practice which caused a great deal of fun. But the gags were sometimes just a trifle too personal, and occasionally resulted in violent recriminations afterwards between gagger and his victim, or victims. This, of course, only served to increase the interest which these really quite excellent performances excited.

In those days we did not play out-of-door games very much. To-day, I believe, they are far more popular, with the troops as elsewhere, than they were then.

Youngsters brought up in comparatively humble circumstances did not in those days get the opportunities of playing proper cricket and football as they do now, and consequently, at any rate so far as the former game is concerned, the situation was that while most of the officers were good players, the rank and file were not.

However, we sergeants organized a cricket club amongst ourselves, the cost of bats, stumps, and other necessary equipment being provided by the mess funds. As it turned out, some of us were quite good at the game. We had the practice nets up pretty well every evening, and usually had a match on Saturday afternoons.

We had in our team at least one notable slogger, a big fellow named Rowsell, a native of Tonbridge, where every schoolboy became a cricketer even in those days. I have some reason to remember his logging capabilities, too !

It happened one evening when we were practising at the nets. I had had my turn with the bat and had gone behind the wicket to retrieve and pitch

back the missed balls to the bowler. I was expecting an easy time—Rowsell did not miss much.

The bowlers on this occasion included Sergeant Robinson, another of our cricket stalwarts, who was a slow, left-hand bowler of the Frank Woolley type. When it came to his turn to bowl he sent Rowsell up one of his tricky slows and Rowsell stepped out scornfully to slog it. I, however, had a notion that he might miss it, and stepped close up to catch the ball. And he DID miss it. He made a terrific swipe to leg, but it seemed as though the ball deliberately dodged his bat. I, intent on a smart bit of wicket-keeping, did not realize my danger. As it was, I caught the ball in my left hand and also caught the heel of Towsell's bat full on the nose. I have said that he was a notable hitter, and, as may be readily believed, after that, like the gentleman in Bret Harte's poem, 'the subsequent proceedings interested me no more. . . .'

When I came back to the world of men I was lying on a stretcher and being hurried off to hospital. I asked rather vaguely where I was and what had happened, whereupon a sergeant walking beside me replied, with a trace of pride in his tone :

"You shut up, old son. You're a casualty."

And he spoke no more than the truth, it seemed, for on examining me at the hospital they found that the bone of my nose was smashed to splinters. The bat had just missed my right eye, but had made a severe cut beneath it. Altogether my face was in a pretty bad mess !

Hospital surgery in those days was nothing like it is in these, and I soon resigned myself to the idea of being badly disfigured. But I was saved from this by the skill—I doubt if I should be exaggerating if I called it the genius—of an Eurasian hospital assistant, who, taking tremendous pains, managed to set the broken fragments of bone in the nose, and

neatly stitched up the cheek. After that I spent a fortnight with my face in a plaster of Paris mask, which was mighty uncomfortable, but to-day there is little to show for the injury beyond a perceptible hollow in my right cheekbone. On the whole I owe that Eurasian quite a lot—even the most skilful plastic surgeons of to-day could hardly do a better job.

It might be thought that this adventure would put me off cricket for good and all. But, on the contrary, it rather fired my enthusiasm, and I stuck to it until I attained a quite useful proficiency at the game, and in time was almost invariably called on to act as umpire at any important match that was being played. But in whatever capacity I was on the field, I always took care to keep as far as possible away from the batsman!

I developed a real love of the game, which has never left me, and my four sons are all good players. John, the eldest, captained the Notts Parson's team in 1925, and Sandy, my second son, topped both the batting and bowling averages for Rhodesia about the same year. He was offered a place in the South African team that toured England in 1928, but could not accept on account of his duties with the B.S.A.P., much to his disgust.

Apart from the ordinary routine of work, sport, and play, there are all sorts of special duties which fall to the soldier's lot in India.

As an instance, during my first winter out there, I had a very interesting and valuable experience. In order to round off a boundary, and for various other reasons, the Indian Government had acquired from the Raja of Bhartpur a tract of land some hundred miles square, which was situated about fifty miles from Agra.

It was considered necessary to make a complete survey of this tract and a survey party was organized

for that purpose. This party was to be in charge of two Royal Engineers officers, and we, in company with the 13th Hussars stationed at Mutra, were required to furnish two sergeants and six men for duty with the party.

When I saw in daily orders that volunteers were called for for this duty, I immediately sent my name in, and was duly chosen to go, along with Sergeant Tom Hedwith.

We started off about the middle of December 1880 and the officer in charge, a Captain Wilson, assigned to me the task of using a chain to measure bases and a theodolite to measure angles, all, of course, under his close supervision, which delighted me very much.

With the exception of Saturdays and Sundays we changed our ground daily. The country was flat and open, with small villages dotted here and there, the cultivated tracts being separated from each other by wide stretches of jungle. There were also frequent clumps of trees in the otherwise open country, and considerable patches of reed-bordered *Jheels* or swamps.

All these features had to be plotted out on our map, their exact location, area, etc. given. Also all villages, with their names, area, estimated population, religions, and so on. It was a laborious, but to me, a most interesting task.

Captain Wilson and his party worked through the country in search of the necessary information just as the clerks of William the Conqueror penetrated the country-side of England almost a thousand years ago for the information now preserved in the Domesday Book. I found it both educative and stimulating to the imagination.

I wrote all Captain Wilson's notes as he dictated them, and tabulated them on reaching camp in the evenings. He was a very pleasant man, and relaxed

all the disciplinary restrictions due to the difference in our rank, and used to chat with me as man to man when we were alone together, as was often the case. He was a kindly and sociable man, and I learned a lot from him, as well as having a most interesting and enjoyable time.

From this rough picture of a soldier's life in India (and in essentials it is, I think, much the same to-day as it was in my time) it will be seen that, though pleasant enough in its way, it is not by any means that of a lotus eater.

CHAPTER XII

A DOUBTFUL STEP

EARLY in 1881 another opportunity came my way, but I have to say that at first sight it seemed to me to be anything but a golden one!

Major Heathcote, of 'Ours,' was notorious throughout the regiment as a 'hard case.' An old soldier with many years' experience to his credit, he was as tough a martinet as one could meet, very 'regimental' and, in addition, of a very irritable and irascible disposition. In the sergeants' mess he was said to be a good man to keep away from, and all who were forced to have anything to do with him openly congratulated themselves on the fact that he was due for compulsory retirement at the end of that year, when at the age of forty-eight he would be put on the retired list with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and presumably retire to his estates in Hampshire to live the life of a country gentleman—or, as many suggested, of a country tyrant.

Soon after we came to Agra in 1880 his colour-sergeant had got into a bad mess with his company accounts, mainly, it was said, through difficulty in resisting the thirsty climate, but also partly through incapability, PLUS Major Heathcote's harassing insistence on correctness.

A Sergeant Daly was then promoted to take his place, but did little better. He didn't seem to be up to the work, and presently sickness added to his difficulties. It was said that the sickness was mainly due to the hazing and bullying of his Company

Officer ! So he finally resigned, and reverted back to sergeant.

By a coincidence both these unlucky colour-sergeants had been Irishmen, and now yet another man from the Emerald Isle was selected to fill the vacancy, this time a man called Calli—a queer name for an Irishman, which seems as though it might have been a corruption of Kelly.

He was no more successful than his predecessors, and was very soon at loggerheads with the Major, who accused him of slackness. Before very long he also had resigned, and taken up a position on the prison staff at Allahabad, breathing vain but fervent hopes that one day he would have his late Company Officer there as a prisoner, so that he could get a bit of his own back.

All this, of course, did not improve the reputation of Major Heathcote in the sergeants' mess, and throughout the regiment, his name became on a par with that of the bogey one uses to frighten naughty children with.

One by one the senior sergeants were paraded before Colonel Rowland, our Commanding Officer, and offered the job deserted by Calli. In the ordinary way they would, of course, have jumped at the chance of promotion. But the name of Major Heathcote scared them stiff, and to a man they refused to serve under him ! Donald Munro, who *at this time was doing duty as hospital sergeant and* therefore was not called upon, congratulated himself upon a lucky escape.

Then, one morning, I was ordered to appear before the Colonel, and, well knowing what the reason for that summons was, I paraded in some trepidation, but quite determined to refuse the offer of promotion, tempting as it would have been in the ordinary way.

When I appeared before the Colonel he looked

me over with an appraising eye and seemed to approve of what he saw :

"Well, Fraser," said he, with a heartiness which, somehow, did not ring quite true, "I've been hearing good reports of you and I want you to take your promotion, and serve as colour-sergeant in the 'H' Company."

I didn't quite like the way that was phrased—it sounded to me more like an order than an offer. And, of course, if I refused, and thereby offended the Colonel, I should not be doing myself any good.

However I spoke up like a good one :

"I appreciate the OFFER," I stressed that word slightly, "very much indeed, sir, but I don't think I can do it. You see, sir, I am very young as yet, and I don't think I've had enough experience for such a post."

"Indeed?" retorted the Colonel, with a rather hard ring in his voice. "Well, Sergeant-Major Thompson tells me that you're a suitable N.C.O. for it, and I agree with him. You may be young and inexperienced, but you'll soon get over that. And I think you must agree that the Sergeant-Major and myself are better judges of such a matter than you are?"

Hang it! There was no answer to that, without something very like insolence.

I saw that the Colonel was sick of the whole business, and was quite determined that I should take the post, so it was plain there was nothing for it but to give in.

However I managed to get the last word in :

"Very well, sir," said I. "I accept your ruling, and thank you and the Sergeant-Major very much for your good opinion of me. But I would like, sir, if I may suggest it, that the appointment should be on probation—and then it won't look quite so bad if I fail."

The C.O. smiled at that, and muttered something about a 'Canny Scot,' and I was duly promoted to colour-sergeant and drafted to 'H' Company.

All the same, I felt very uncomfortable about it, and my misgivings were not in any way decreased by the chaff and the gloomy sympathy that came to me from the mess. From their attitude I might as well have been going to my own funeral as to 'H' Company.

However, the gruelling I received from the other sergeants, instead of discouraging me, made me make up my mind that I would somehow get away with it, and just show 'em. So I duly moved my belongings over to 'H' Company and waded resolutely into the task of creating order from sheer confusion.

When I got down to it I soon discovered that much of the trouble had arisen from the handling of an unfamiliar and not properly understood currency, resulting in all sorts of mistakes in the men's pay books.

I found that the attitude of Major Heathcote had not been very grossly exaggerated, but I realized also that of late many things had combined to make him angry and unreasonable, and I determined that, harass me as he might, I would stick it somehow. After all, he could not do very much with me as long as I worked hard and did my duty—and this programme I proceeded to follow out to the letter.

I got on the right side of the men, who were a very decent set of fellows, and who helped me quite a lot by never resenting my encroachments on their spare time in going over past happenings, rectifying mistakes which had as frequently been beneficial to them as the other way about, inspecting their belts and straps to see that they were complete and properly marked, and so on.

I also went over the company's spare stores, and in time got all the material put right.

My immediate helper and right-hand man in all this pother was another Scot—a Corporal Tom Lindsay. He was quite a good clerk, and had been employed by my unfortunate predecessors in helping them with the company accounts, and so was familiar with most of the ins and outs of the situation. Lindsay was a tremendous help to me—without him I should indeed have been as a little child wandering in the dark.

Of course I had a brush or two with Major Heathcote, but, while remaining perfectly respectful, I usually came off best, and presently I think he realized that I really was working hard and doing my best, and he let up on me a little.

But Major Heathcote was not my only trial at that time. A Major Pocklington, whose duty as second-in-command entailed the general supervision of 'interior economy' as such off-parade work was called, was both incessant and indefatigable in his inquiries. Between him and Major Heathcote I had a pretty stiff time of it.

However, although I was not actively conscious of it, there must have been in my mind an echo of my father's injunction in one of his letters : ' . . . you never know who is watching you and taking stock of your proceedings and conduct . . . ' and I acted on it, and so feared no man—though I have to admit that those two majors were a sore trial to me !

As time went on I began to understand Major Heathcote a little and realized that beneath the surface he was a true gentleman. We got on all the better for that realization on my part.

All things come to an end, sooner or later ! By the end of March I was able, after seven weeks of labour and perseverance, to produce a correct balance sheet, all mistakes rectified, and all deficiencies in

the spare stores duly made up. When the company accounts were inspected, early in April, by Major Pocklington, he gave me a queer look and said :

" You have done wonders, Fraser ! I congratulate you."

I felt that I was to some extent rewarded for my labours, though the main reward lay in the feeling that I had succeeded in something to which I had set my hand, and under great difficulties.

Next day I was sent for by the Colonel, and when I paraded before him, to my amazement he jumped up and shook me heartily by the hand, congratulating me on what I had done.

Then he turned to Sergeant-Major Thompson, who was also present, and exclaimed :

" You were right again, Sergeant-Major—as usual ! "

But perhaps the most satisfactory interview of all for me was the one I had subsequently with Major Heathcote, the ' terror ' of ' H ' Company, who actually opened his heart to me in the privacy of my own room.

" I expect," he confessed, " I've made myself a bit of a nuisance, one way and another. But you see, Fraser, I've been feeling pretty worried. I've been looking forward to retiring for a long time now, and it would most certainly have been held up while the accounts were in the mess they were when you took over. Well, you've got me out of that mess, and I appreciate it ! As some very small token of my appreciation, I'm going to make you a little present of fifty rupees."

I was equally surprised by his attitude and complimented by his appreciation. And furthermore, in view of the fact that he had had to make up all deficiencies from his own pocket, I realized that his present was a generous one. When I thanked him, I said :

"Quite a lot is due to Corporal Lindsay, sir. His help was invaluable, and I should never have managed without him."

"Right you are!" said the Major. "Lindsay shall have ten rupees for himself." He sent for him and then thanked him and gave him the money.

I would have prevented this if I could, for I was aware of poor Tom Lindsay's weakness, and knew just what he would do with it.

And he did.

He went straight off into the city where cheap whiskey and other less harmless joys could be obtained in unlimited quantities. Indeed, I think those ten rupees were poor Lindsay's downfall, for not long afterwards he was reduced to the ranks for being drunk on duty. After that he took the first opportunity to go home to Glasgow and spent the rest of his twelve years' army engagement on the Reserve.

After this Major Heathcote made something of a confidant of me, and I discovered that the real basic cause of the trouble between himself and the other sergeants had been that all three of them were Irishmen and devout Catholics, whereas the Major was English and Church of England, brought up with a bitter hatred of Rome and all its ways, and a total misunderstanding of the Irish. So that it was not entirely either slackness or incapacity on the part of my predecessors that caused them to fail. The Major simply could not deal with them fairly, nor could they possibly get on with him. And so it was that I really gained my latest promotion, not through any special qualification of my own, but really owing to the everlasting activity of the age-old demon of religious intolerance.

But that did not stop me from having a good crow over those gloomy prophets in the sergeants' mess!

I was quite sorry when Major Heathcote's long-desired retirement actually happened, and said 'good-bye' to him with genuine regret.

But we were destined to meet again, for when in 1898 we were on manœuvres in the New Forest, he came along to have a look at his old battalion and found me there as sergeant-major. He was enormously pleased to see me again, and very kindly recalled how I had been of assistance to him at Agra.

CHAPTER XIII

CHAKRATA

THE hot weather of '81 passed very pleasantly, and in the end the monsoon broke the monotony, and then became monotonous in its turn—which is the way of most things in this life.

Major Heathcote left us in October, and for one reason and another 'H' Company did not get another Company Officer until early in '83. During all this time the company was under the command of one or other of the senior subalterns attached to it, and everything went swimmingly. To mix the metaphor a trifle, routine with the company went along like a well-made and properly oiled machine, that runs almost by itself.

The personal story of almost any soldier serving in India (or elsewhere, for that matter) must necessarily be full of chronological gaps, for there are invariably and necessarily long periods when there is nothing at all interesting to talk or write about. This record of mine will be no exception to the rule. Thus I remember nothing worth writing about occurring in '82. There was the usual round of work and play and nothing else. When the cold weather came round again 'H' Company put in a month on detachment in a fort near the city, then returned to headquarters for the annual musketry course, preparations for the General's inspection, and so on.

We got through our third spell of hot weather

and in October of that year received the welcome news of an impending change. We were to leave Agra, and move to Chakrata, a hill-station up in the Himalayas, some eight thousand feet above sea-level, and about three hundred and fifty miles from Agra. We were looking for a change and all glad of it.

During that year, too, we lost a hundred and twenty of our old comrades, who were drafted back to England, and replaced by men from the home battalion. We also put in a lot of time (and distance !) route-marching, which I always consider to be one of the pleasantest of my experiences of Indian service. Certainly we had plenty of it, for, before we left India in 1894 we had covered three thousand miles on the march.

Here are a few lines, probably by one of 'ours,' about route-marching :

'O, the bugle-notes go braying through the thin air of the morn
(*"Fall in, my lads, fall in there, or you'll wish you wasn't born!"*)

Then it's *tap-tap-tap* and "*left-right-left*" and your rifle feels
a load,

As off you go route-marching down the Grand Trunk Road ;
While the dust goes up to heaven, and the sun burns up the
track,

And your feet are sore and aching, but you never dare to slack.
Five hundred feet that sound as one, while bullock-wallahs stare
(*"O, where's that blinkin' campin' ground—how soon shall
we be there . . . ?"*)

In November we were relieved by the 1st Border Regiment and we quitted barracks for tents pitched on the rifle range near by, and next set off on our march along the Grand Trunk Road, camping each night. And it would perhaps surprise some of the men who were under canvas in the Great War to know what a joy it is to live under canvas in India.

In marching from one station to another Sunday was a rest day. On Saturday nights we used to have 'camp concerts' and very jolly and picturesque affairs they were. The whole strength (unless, as sometimes happened, any of the officers had obtained

week-end leave for shooting) used to gather round the fire, the officers sitting in their deck-chairs, the 'other ranks' squatting on the ground: "Phwich," as an Irish corporal said, "has the wan great advantage that ye can't be fallin' off it at all!"

These were great times, really, because to all intents and purposes the restrictions of military discipline and difference in ranks were temporarily forgotten, and we became, in a sense, just a crowd of good fellows out for an hour's enjoyment.

One of the officers would be chosen, or would volunteer, to act as chairman, and he would get on his feet and address the crowd, somewhat as follows:

CHAIRMAN: "Now, all of you—who'll volunteer to give the first song?"

Dead silence, except for an occasional rather nervous cough and a sort of uneasy rustling among the crowd.

CHAIRMAN: "Come along now—don't all shout at once, and no rushing the stage. Who's it going to be now?"

A VOICE: "Maybe ye'd be givin' us a lead yerself, sir. . . ?"

Some chuckling from the crowd.

CHAIRMAN: "Here, I say—I thought the Irish were always ready to lead on a forlorn hope. . . ."

Roars of laughter at this sally—a very small witticism served to amuse us in such circumstances—and then:

ANOTHER VOICE: "There y'are, Spud Murphy. Now, get on with it—you can sing as well as the next man, you old spalpeen!"

The first voice, thus detected and named, protests, angrily at first and then plaintively. But his protests are drowned in yells of:

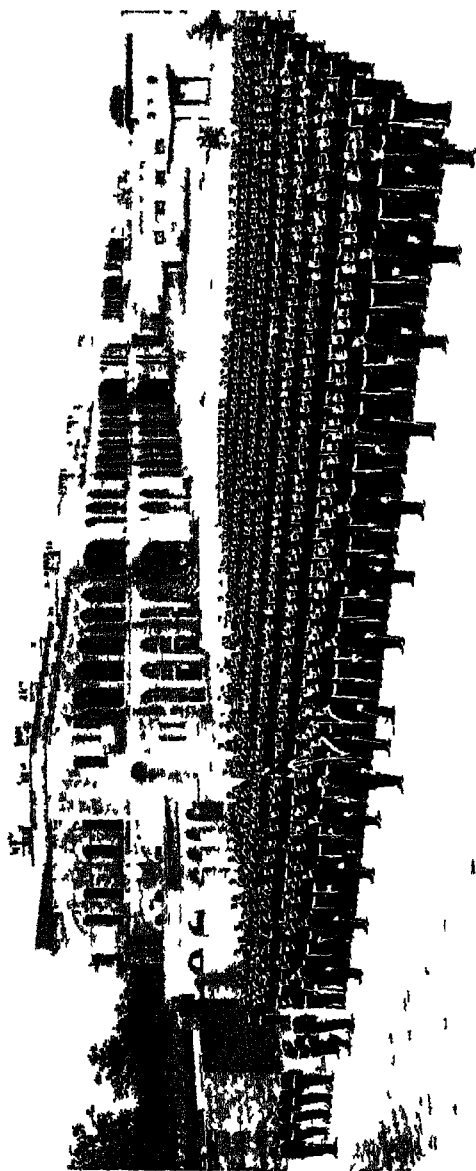
OMNES: "Spud Murphy! Go on, Spud. For the honour of Ould Oireland, bedad! Go it, Spud, *Erin go Bragh*. . . ."



REGIMENTAL CREST AND MOTTO, 10 FEET BY 8 FEET,
CUT INTO ROCK FACE, CHIRAT, 1893



SOLDIERS' JUNGLING PARTY, BENARES, 1894



THE NORTHUMBERLAND FUSILIERS ON PARADE AT THE PESHAWAR BARRACKS, 1893

And so on until Murphy consents to 'oblige' with a sentimental Irish ditty, such as is always popular with a crowd like us. We are off!

There was plenty of talent amongst us. Many had only one song, like the Sergeant-Major with his 'Robin Tamson's Smiddy,' or Sergeant Finlay with 'Paddy Hegarty's Ould Leather Breeches.' Curiously enough (history repeats itself) Harry Morgan's one song was entitled 'The Marble Arch'—though it bore little resemblance to the modern 'number' with a similar title. Others had quite a repertoire, and we never got tired of our old favourites, though new items were welcomed, especially if presented by some man with a familiar nickname, such as 'Spud' Murphy, 'Topper' Brown, 'Nobby' Clark, or 'Dummy' Wood. (I often wonder what is the origin of some of these time-honoured nicknames. Of course 'Spud' Murphy is clear enough, but why are all Clarkes 'Nobby' and all Wilsons 'Tug'?)

They were very jolly and convivial, those camp-fire concerts, imbued with an atmosphere entirely free from the artificial restraints produced by military discipline, and definitely calculated to improve the relations between officers and men. Our lack of artistic finish was more than made up for by our enthusiasm and almost childish enjoyment, and everyone felt all the better after one of these 'do's.'

With the opening notes of the 'First Post,' which the bugles sounded at 9.30, we commenced to break up, and by ten o'clock we were all in our tents and sleeping the sleep of the tired if not of the just.

Early in December we arrived at Meerut and settled down in camp until the following February. There was a battalion of the 68th Durham Light Infantry there, who gave us a hearty welcome, and

also two batteries of the R.H.A., one regiment of British and one of native cavalry, and three battalions of native infantry.

Arrived at Meerut there was a tightening up of discipline and 'real soldiering' was resumed with energy and enthusiasm. Once a week we had a divisional parade, under the command of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, and he always insisted on the utmost smartness and efficiency. We came through these ordeals well, thanks mainly to our C.O., Colonel Rowland, who had the art of blending the manner of a martinet with a really kindly and understanding nature, and consequently kept us well (and willingly) up to the mark. He was a fine man, our Colonel, and I salute his memory with respect and admiration.

Late in February we moved up to Chakrata, our new station in the hills, which was about ten days' march to the north of Meerut. Chakrata was one of the numerous stations maintained by the Government in order to give the troops a change from the heat of the plains, and keep them in good health.

We found it a pleasant change indeed, for, situated about eight thousand feet above sea-level, the climate there was much the same as that of England, except, of course, for its consistent regularity. Our barracks were built here and there on the mountain slopes, wherever a bit of level could be made, and strung out at quite considerable distances along a sort of ridge, the centre of which had been levelled to form our parade ground, around which stood the church, the offices, stores, etc., and the officers' and sergeants' messes. But perhaps the most notable difference from any place we had hitherto occupied in India was that we had fire-places in place of punkahs.

Soon after arriving at Chakrata, I acquired a nice cocker-spaniel pup, whom I named Punch. He

proved, as he grew up, to be a most intelligent beastie, quick to learn anything.

We were rather bothered by cheetahs up there, and these animals would regard a small dog as a legitimate and toothsome meal. For this reason I was sometimes worried about Punch, especially at night.

In order to see our way about at night-time, we had to have a light, and, there being no such things as electric flash-lamps in those days, we usually carried hurricane lamps. The sergeants' mess, where I had my meals, was some distance from my quarters, and when I went down there in the evening, though I went in the daylight, it was necessary to take a hurricane lamp with me in order to find my way back in the later darkness. Punch soon learned to carry this lamp for me, and would trot at my heels in the daylight carrying the unlighted lamp in his jaws.

But when darkness had fallen, he would not attempt to take the lamp unless it was first lighted for him.

One evening a pal asked myself and one or two others to spend the evening with him in his quarters : Mr. Mortimer and his wife who had just come up from Meerut where we had been friendly during the previous winter. I purposely left the dog behind, as I knew Mrs. Mortimer didn't keep dogs. On this occasion I did not take a lamp with me, and left Punch in charge of my batman, McGovern, much to Punch's disgust.

Scene in my quarters : McGovern, thinking of turning in, lit a hurricane lamp, preparatory to going 'down the khud,' closely watched by Punch, by now more disgusted than ever. Then McGovern opened the door, placing the lamp on the floor while he did so. But when he turned round again both lamp and Punch had vanished into thin air !

The next scene took place at the quarters of my

host and hostess where, about ten o'clock, the party was just breaking up. Suddenly there came a persistent whining and scratching at the door, and when it was opened there was Punch, wagging his little tail like fury, with the lighted lamp firmly gripped in his jaws as usual. Next morning I was told by friends that the dog, lamp and all, had been seeking me at their houses and in the mess. He had never been to the Mortimer's house before, where he found me.

It was while we were at Chakrata that 'H' Company at last got a regular Company Officer once more, a Captain Pennington, coming out to us from the 1st battalion on promotion.

My first thought when I saw him was : ' My word, but he's a youngster to be a full-blown captain ! '

Almost the first thing he said to me :

" I say, you're frightfully young to be a colour-sergeant, aren't you ? How much service have you got ? "

I could aptly have replied ' Ditto, Brother Smut ! ' But, of course, discipline prevented. So I simply answered :

" Just under six years, sir."

Rather to my surprise, he burst out laughing, and when he could speak again he told me what had tickled him :

" This is a fine thing ! " he exclaimed. " The O.C. and the colour-sergeant of ' H ' Company with not fourteen years' service between them ! Why, it must be a record ! "

He told me afterwards that, passing high up in his final examinations at Sandhurst, he had been granted, as the custom then was in such circumstances, two years' seniority, which meant that his commission was dated as from March 1874 instead of 1876.

In taking over command of the Company he paid

me the great compliment of merely giving a cursory glance at all I had to show him, instead of meticulously going through every strap tabulated in the accoutrement store-book, and every figure in the Company balance-sheet.

The Company had all felt a little nervous at the arrival of the Captain, fearing a repetition of some of the times we had had with Major Heathcote, but from the very first we got on splendidly with Captain Pennington, so all was well.

Some of our men, with original ideas, set to work and converted the dining-hall, a cross-section of the single-storey building that held them all, into an entertainment hall as well. The floor was of plain deal, and quite good to dance on, and soon we were having dances and concerts on alternate Saturday nights.

'H' Company had several members of the regimental band in it, and by permission, we were able to organize these musicians into quite a good little orchestra, so it was not long before our concerts, and especially our dances, became a very popular feature of regimental life in Chakrata.

Attached to each whole battalion there were twenty-five to thirty ladies, wives of officers and other ranks, who were delighted to take advantage of such entertainment, and many of whom were soon enrolled in our list of helpers and performers.

These shows of ours—and again particularly the dances—did much to increase the social amenities of station life, especially among the ladies.

For instance, I remember one night when, having steered Mrs. 'Spud' Murphy, wife of a drummer, through the mazes of the Lancers, I took her back to her seat, and then found that she was very anxious about the welfare of her six-months' old infant, which she had wrapped up in a blanket and left asleep in an obscure corner of the 'dance room.'

I volunteered to accompany her on a visit of inspection, and when we arrived at the spot where the drummer's wife had left her child—there it was in the arms of Mrs. Pennington, the Captain's wife, who had come in with the Captain while the Lancers were in progress.

Of course we both stood there staring, more than a little embarrassed—especially poor Mrs. Murphy, who seemed to be terror-stricken as well.

Mrs. Pennington, who had been bending over the baby as tenderly as though it had been her own, looked up and saw us standing there. She guessed, of course, that Mrs. Murphy was the mother of the temporarily abandoned infant, and, much more cleverly, just about how she was feeling at the moment. And she set her at her ease in the cleverest manner possible by saying, with a winning little smile :

"Oh, I do hope you don't mind ! You see, the noise of the band woke her, and she seemed distressed."

Mrs. 'Spud' turned about forty-five different shades of red and then stammered :

"Oh, m'am, it's very good of you, I'm sure. And I'm so sorry you have been troubled. . . ."

"Troubled ! Not a bit of it !" laughed the Captain's wife. "Why, I'm thoroughly enjoying it. I tell you what, you go off and have another dance, and I'll nurse baby. Then we shall both be enjoying ourselves."

And so it was, the officer's wife insisting on nursing the baby of the drummer's wife while the latter danced !

As we walked away, back to the dancing, Mrs. Murphy murmured in my ear, in an awestricken but delighted voice :

"Well, now, ain't that wonderful ? Did yer ever 'ear the like of it—an' she the officer's lady, too !"

You may be sure that such incidents as these went a very long way to establish a very kindly feeling, not only between the officers and men, but also between the ladies of the former and the wives of the latter.

Apropos, by the way, of the rather curious distinction between the women-folk of the commissioned ranks and the other women in the barracks, as exemplified by the official description : ‘ Officers’ ladies and wives of other ranks,’ there is an old army yarn which may be unfamiliar to some of my civilian readers.

It is said that a young soldier, not yet familiar with military terms and jargon, was on sentry one night with instructions to allow only certain specified persons to pass. Along came a lady, evidently unaware of the restriction, who, when stopped by the sentry, indignantly exclaimed :

“ Don’t you know that I am Major ——’s lady ? ”

To which the stubborn sentry replied :

“ I’m sure I’m very sorry, mum, but if you was the Major’s wife, it wouldn’t make any difference ! ”

CHAPTER XIV

THE TIME TO PART

LIFE at Chakrata was, on the whole, very pleasant and varied, though we had rather a stiff time during June 1883 when H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, G.O.C. Meerut Division, came up with the Duchess and their two little girls to spend the latter part of the month in the hills.

The Duke took the opportunity to hold his annual inspection of the troops which, in army parlance, 'put the wind well up' all concerned.

However, we came through all right—in fact with flying colours.

H.R.H. complimented Captain Pennington on the state of his company books and accounts, and then I was sent for, and also came in for some gracious words of princely-praise and encouragement.

He particularly commented on my youthful appearance in view of my rank—and once again I was tempted to retort: 'Ditto, Brother Smut!' For actually, he was in the same boat. At his then age of thirty-three, but for his Royal birth, his rank in the Army would have been that of a senior subaltern, or, at the outside, a captain, instead of a major-general.

But, of course, discipline kept me silent—a soldier must not reply to any remark made by a superior officer unless he is ordered to do so.

Most of the other companies came out of the ordeal of G.O.C.'s inspection rather badly, and so it

was by way of being a triumph for 'H' Company, and therefore a minor triumph for me.

But now I have to touch upon a matter which was very far from being a triumph—one, in fact, which I would far rather forget, and not mention here, but that honesty compels me to do so. There are few men, I suppose, who have not at least one such incident in their lives, but that does not make me regret it any the less, or feel any less ashamed of it.

Every cloud, we are told, has its silver lining, and the silver lining to this one, I suppose, is that, looking back over the years, I do feel that, as things have turned out, it was probably for the best. But it didn't seem like that at the time, and it caused me much troubled thought, many a sleepless night, and, I think, all the pangs of conscience I deserved.

The fact was that I was within a little while of reaching the expiration of my six years' engagement, and was therefore entitled to return home during the next trooping season.

It was a time I had been looking forward to ever since I had first reached India, but with an eagerness which, I must admit, had been decreasing steadily as time went on.

My main eagerness to get home again, when it had existed at all, was to get back to the sweet, faithful girl who was waiting for me, and to marry her.

When I had been ordered to India, Charlotte and I had, of course, had a very serious talk. I had asked her to wait for me, and she had promised to do so. That promise she had most faithfully kept. I knew from her letters that she had had chances which she had gladly let slip—because of her promise to wait for me. And from her letters also I knew with what eagerness she awaited my home-coming.

Now that the time was so near I realized that I had not the slightest desire to go. Nay, worse than that, I realized, when at last I faced the facts squarely, that to leave the Army, and abandon the career I had made for myself there, would be a tremendous wrench, greater I thought, than I should be able to endure.

I argued the problem out with myself, from all angles, trying desperately to be dispassionate and detached over it. But all the time, I had a lurking suspicion that I was not taking, and could not take, a really detached and impartial attitude. The matter, whichever way it went, was too near to my heart to make such an attitude possible.

But as the time drew nearer I knew that my decision, one way or the other, would have to be made. Should I go home to Charlotte and obscurity, or remain with the Army that I now realized I had come to love so well, and in which I was building for myself a very creditable career ?

In its way it was about as tough a problem as any man could be called upon to face, and at last, in despair, I decided to confide in my old friend Donald Munro, who was by this time also a colour-sergeant, attached to 'G' Company.

I took an early opportunity to lay my case before Munro.

He listened to my story with the closest attention, but if I had hoped for an impartial judge, I soon saw that my hope was a vain one.

I cannot, of course, remember the conversation word for word, but the gist of it has stuck in my memory, and always will, while life lasts.

When I had laid all the facts before Donald, he looked at me steadily and shook his head before making any comment. Then, at last, he said :

"Man, man, it's hard to believe ! It's wellnigh incredible ! No more than six years ago, way back

there in Chatham, I was taking kindly to a bright young recruit, and teaching him barrack-room soldiering, and getting him his first stripe. And about six weeks ago that bright young recruit who used to be was teaching ME the tricks of company accounts! And that young fellow was YOU."

I grinned rather sheepish, and nodded:

"That's right!"

"Yes," responded Donald, grimly. "THAT'S RIGHT!—and now, that same fellow—you—who've made such a success of yourself as a soldier . . ."

"Thanks to you," I interpolated, modestly, but none the less warmly.

"I don't think so, but thanks to me, if you like. . . . And now, you're seriously talking about chucking it all up, and going back to England and civvy life, just because of some girl. . . . Why man, the whole idea is just . . ."

And he used a number of descriptive terms that I will not venture to repeat.

"But, look here, Donald," I interposed, when he had stopped for breath, and in order to mop his heated brow, "you must get this right, you know. To start with, Charlotte isn't an ordinary girl—I mean she isn't just the ordinary soldier's little bit of fluff, met casually and walked out with and . . . well, you know what I mean. She's a GOOD girl—the best girl I've ever known. When I was down on my luck, out of a job she stuck to me like a good 'un. When I joined the Army she stuck by me and said it was the best thing I could do in the circumstances. When I was drafted abroad, she agreed again. We made a mutual promise of marriage, and she promised to wait for me. Not only did she promise, but she's kept that promise most faithfully. She's waited all these years—and she's given the go-by to goodness knows how many offers of marriage, or possible offers, just to keep faith with

me. How, in such circumstances, can I possibly break my word to her? How can I possibly be heartless enough to give her the go-by, just for the sake of wordly position? Tell me that."

Donald looked at me through narrowed eyes.

"You talk glibly, lad," said he, slowly, "of heartlessness and worldly position. Has it occurred to you that maybe the most heartless thing you could do would be to go home and marry that girl?"

I stared at that.

"What on earth do you mean, Donald?"

"I should have thought you'd have realized, but I'll tell you. You talk of going home and marrying that girl who's waited for you so long. That will be fine for her—so far! But what about after you're married? You've got to provide her with a home, and keep her at any rate at the standard she's been used to. Well, how are you going to do so? You're a good soldier, John, BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO IN CIVVY LIFE TO EARN A LIVING FOR HER AND FOR YOURSELF? You're maybe a useful man in the Army, but what sort of use will you be out of it? There you'll be just one more untrained and unskilled worker—not much use to anyone. You know as well as I do that no sort of army character, or the finest recommendation as a good N.C.O. will help you in the slightest to get even the meanest job. If you're lucky you might get occasional work as a labourer, or something like that. If you're unlucky, you'll just walk the streets until you break your heart—and her's, too. Is THAT going to do her any good? Is THAT any sort of reward for the way she's stuck to you? D'you think, in the long run, she'll thank you for being an honourable man and coming back to her—and then dragging her down to the gutter?"

"I know one thing," I asserted, "she'd never complain."

"Maybe not! But you'd KNOW, wouldn't you? And what sort of a skunk d'you think you'd feel? Man, man! You just can't do it. It would be sheer madness. You can't throw up a career like this for the sake of a girl—not even the best one in the world—especially when you know you'll only ruin her life by so doing. And now, for heaven's sake, be sensible. . .!"

I left it at that. I realized that, in the grip of a problem such as mine, one had ultimately to rely on one's self. No other person could really help you.

I thought it over until my brain throbbed. There was no doubt about it, that Donald was right about what I could—or rather I couldn't—do in civil life. There was no sort of job, or even the prospect of one, waiting for me, and what chance had I got of getting one? In those days an ex-soldier was looked upon with the greatest suspicion—or even worse—by any commercial employer. He was regarded as a man who had been trained to idleness, inefficiency, and 'dodging the column,' and a rough character to boot. There was no work for such as he.

I called up a vision of Charlotte waiting so patiently and faithfully all those years for me, giving other would-be suitors the go-by; letting her chances of marriage slip away from her; waiting and waiting in the sure faith that I would return to her. I pictured her face as she read my letter saying I was not coming home; I tried to experience in my own heart the despair and bitterness that would fill hers, when, at last, she realized that I was both faithless and heartless, and I asked myself: *How could I not go back to her?*

Then I conjured up another vision, of a mean, poorly furnished room, without fire and with an empty larder. And of Charlotte sitting by the cold

grate while I tramped the streets in a vain search for work, and meeting me when I dragged myself home with that quiet, patient smile of hers—yet with a dullness of despair behind her eyes. Worse, I saw visions of her with broom and pail performing menial tasks for callous strangers in order to help keep us existing in our wretchedness, while I remained unwillingly idle. And again I asked myself: *How could I possibly go back to her—to bring her to that?*

At last, when I was getting, I think, somewhat near to a mental breakdown, I wrote to Charlotte and laid the whole circumstances before her, just as I had teased them out in my thoughts during many sleepless nights.

In due course her answer came back. It was a sweet letter, and once more she agreed, as she had agreed when I first enlisted and again when I came out to India that I was right. She renounced our agreement, and gave me back my freedom, with never a word of her own pain, or what it must have cost her, never a reproach for the years I had caused her to waste. She was a very good woman—the best I had ever met.

It all seemed very terrible and heartless at the time, especially as, once I had got it over, I soon commenced to forget her in the absorption of my military duties. To add to poor Charlotte's sorrows her mother died, and she was left quite alone. That made me feel a worse brute than ever.

But now, as things have turned out, I have a conviction that what I did was actually for the best, brutal and heartless as it may have seemed at the time.

And there is another argument in favour of it which I missed at the time, but which, as my experience in what sometimes happens to married people, grew. I came to realize. It is this :

There is no doubt but that my inclination lay with the Army, and not with Charlotte. True, I loved her (or thought I did), but I loved the Army and my career therein still more. And if I had given up the greater love for the lesser, what would in all probability have happened? I should have cherished a grievance against poor Charlotte. Unconsciously at first, but consciously later, I should have bitterly resented the fact that through her I had been dragged from the Army where I had a career and a future, and thrust into civilian life, where there was no place for me. And if, as was most probable, Donald's alarming vision of lack of work and poverty had come true, I can see that we might well have come to hating each other (though it is difficult to imagine Charlotte hating anyone), I, because she had dragged me from the Army. She, because I had dragged her down to the gutter. And we should both have had some justification.

Gradually, after her mother's death, the correspondence between myself and Charlotte dwindled until finally it ceased altogether. I could not say whether that was my fault or hers, but I sometimes fancied that she had deliberately let me drop out of her life.

But I shall have more to tell of her later, when the right time comes.

CHAPTER XV

I RESCUE 'B.-P.'

THEY are telling us to-day--and I have no doubt but that they are right that the rifle as a weapon of practical warfare is finished. Prophets tell us that in the next war there will be no individual riflemen, only machine-guns with their detachments of four or six men. That, I suppose, is what is called progress, but it all sounds very strange and rather sad to an old soldier brought up to the use of a rifle.

I remember well how we of '11' Company patted ourselves on the back in 1883 because we came out on top in the annual course of musketry. This success of ours was entirely due to Captain Pennington, who, as well as being a fine rifle-shot himself, possessed to a high degree the art of teaching how to shoot. Many a man showed poor results at the butts merely through ignorance of little tricks in aiming, in pressing the trigger at the right moment, or in standing, kneeling, or lying in precisely the right attitude. Captain Pennington was able to put our poorer marksmen right in these matters, and he also fully understood the necessity for additional practice for the worst shots, and saw to it that they had it, 'wangling' extra ammunition for this purpose. And, so, thanks to him, '11' Company covered themselves with glory that year!

In addition to this we had a very pleasant fortnight at the Musketry Camp and got back to barracks

just before the rains set in. At the annual athletic sports, held on St. George's Day, 'H' Company won the tug-of-war, and mostly had a high number of prize-winners in the individual events.

So far as the elements were concerned, the monsoon in the hills was much the same as we had found it on the plains. But not as regards the flora and the fauna.

The trees on the hill-sides were soon magnificently festooned with a queer, fern-like growth, and maidenhair fern covered their trunks as with dainty raiment. Every ravine carried a foaming, rushing torrent of water, draining from the heights. In barracks, fires became a necessity in the barrack-rooms, and a touch of 'homeliness' was added by a kind of cricket that kept chirping away all night—quite pleasant at first, but very monotonous after a time, and causing much bad language from troops who couldn't get to sleep. But there were no mosquitoes or flies, and that, at any rate, was a welcome change. Leeches were abundant along the thickly overgrown paths, and I got a bit of a shock when I came in one day to find my boots smothered in blood up to the ankles. After that I was careful to wear puttees.

In October we were ordered to Meerut for a cold weather 'camp of exercise.' By that time we could see the snow-line coming lower down on the mountain ranges, and when we returned in March we learned that the snow covered Chakrata before Christmas. So we decided we had had the best of it down at Meerut!

On our march down we used the camping grounds we had become familiar with when coming up. Two days short of our destination we were compelled to call a halt owing to an outbreak of cholera among the native mule-drivers. The disease did not affect our own men, but a period of eight days'

quarantine after the disposal of the last case was enforced.

However, I was destined to escape this. During our second day Donald Munro and I were taking a little stroll out of camp when we were startled to hear the bugle sounding 'Colour-Sergeant—'G' Company—'H' Company. This meant that we were urgently needed and we footed it back at top speed, wondering what the deuce was up.

When we arrived the sergeant-major told me to get my company ready to march into Meerut early the following morning, which was Saturday, make up to 120 strong with men from 'G' Company, and leaving in the camp all details not required for ordinary duty.

I found that thirty N.C.O.s and men would be needed to make up the requisite strength, and reported this to Donald. In an hour he had drafted the necessary number from his company to mine, and I had weeded the unwanted men out.

We had a stiff time in front of us, for the distance of twenty-one miles had to be covered in one march.

We marched gaily out of camp at four o'clock the next morning, after a mugful of coffee and a few biscuits. The 'coffee shop' had been sent along the previous night, complete with the usual 'half-way-halt' supplies, and at the end of a ten-mile march we were glad enough to find them waiting for us. So we had our meal and a half-hour's rest, and then marched on, arriving in Meerut by eleven o'clock.

We found that the cause of our move was the impending departure of a Durham Light Infantry battalion, stationed in Meerut, for Allahabad on the following Monday. The 1st Royal Irish, due to relieve them, had been held up as we were by cholera on the march from Peshawar, too far away to do what we had done.

The D.L.I.s were prepared for our coming and

welcomed us with a hearty and plentiful breakfast, barrack-rooms all ready for us, and the hospitality of their canteen: of which we took the fullest advantage!

The next day, Sunday, we took over the various guards, etc., they had been finding, and on the Monday they marched away as arranged, on the best of terms with themselves and us.

Now, I don't suppose there is a soldier in any army who is better known all over the world than Lord Baden-Powell. His distinguished service in the South African War, followed by his organization and 'fathering' of that very remarkable movement known as the Boy Scouts, has kept him well in the international public eye for an amazingly long period of years. I should imagine that the incident I am about to relate constitutes one of his earliest adventures as a soldier.

After the departure of the D.L.I.s we quite thought we were in for a nice, cosy little time all to ourselves, and duly congratulated ourselves thereon. But our congratulations were premature, and our fond dream was rudely shattered when, that very evening, we were surprised by the arrival of a very large draft of the 2nd Royal Irish, sent from Egypt, where they had been fighting Arabi Pasha.

Owing to that war the 2nd R.I. had not been able to send any men to the 1st battalion, which accounted for the astonishing size of this draft, which was 367 strong!

They arrived expecting to find their friends of the 1st battalion ready to receive them, but found instead only empty barracks and what they regarded as a 'miserable' company of the Northumberlands.

Naturally they were not too pleased at the state of affairs and we didn't blame them. Had we been given notice of their pending arrival, we might have done something to welcome them, but owing to the

slackness and inefficiency of the responsible authorities we had been given no notice. There was a lot of grumbling, and it was pretty clear to the more experienced of us that trouble was likely. When Irishmen get discontented they sometimes have awkward ways of showing it!

However, we did our best to alleviate the situation, getting their bedding and blankets from the barrack stores, their rations from the commissariat, and distributing them in the empty barrack-rooms. Then Captain Pennington dished out some pay on account, and gave them a few well-chosen words on the subject of keeping up the good name of their regiment, and maintaining order and discipline.

This may have had some effect, but if so, it had all worn off before the following Sunday, when the trouble duly broke out.

On this day, the 2 November, I was at tea in the artillery sergeants' mess, we having no mess of our own, when I was startled to hear the bugler repeatedly sounding the 'Picket' and the 'Double.' That was meant for the 'Inlying Picket,' and consisting of two N.C.O.s and six men, who were on duty in barracks in case of emergency. And the 'double' meant that they were wanted in a hurry, too.

I realized that this could only mean trouble, so I doubled off myself to the Quarter Guard, which was their place of assembly if, and when, required.

By the time I got there Sergeant Barker of my company, was explaining to the sergeant of the picket that the Royal Irish were rioting in the town. In fact a number of over-enthusiastic Catholic privates were breaking all the windows of a Presbyterian chapel on the way to the bazaar by throwing road metal, collected from a handy adjacent heap, very useful as ammunition.

I knew the locality and so took charge of the party. We went off at the double, and on the way had to cross the Mall Road, a broad tree-shaded thoroughfare, usually a feature of such cantonments. And there, slap in the middle of the road, were the men we were after, a thoroughly unruly, howling mob.

It seemed that they had turned their attention from the offending Protestant chapel, and were now making 'rings round' some undistinguishable object in their midst.

Having some experience of the religious enthusiasm of the Irish when on the rampage, I was seized by a sudden fear that the object of their attention was some member of the Chapel who had interfered with their little demonstration, and who was now probably at least three parts dead.

There were about twenty-six of the rioters altogether, but that, of course, wasn't stopping us. I gave the order and we charged into them, all together. A brief but useful little scrap followed, in the course of which blows were freely exchanged, and not without gusto. The Irish were annoyed at being interfered with, and we were annoyed at being lugged out of barracks to deal with them. These facts provided plenty of motive for a certain amount of enthusiasm of both sides!

It was very quickly over, and soon some twenty of the rioters were bolting like hares down the road, leaving six of their number in our hands.

I turned my attention to what had been the centre of attraction for the Irishmen, and there lying flat on his back in the centre of the road, with three very large Irish privates sitting on his prostrate form was an officer whom I recognized—with some difficulty, since he was a trifle the worse for wear!—as the Adjutant of the 13th Hussars, by name Lieutenant Baden-Powell.

He was in civilian clothes, not uniform, and I should have had more difficulty in recognizing him but for the fact that I had seen him several times during our stay in Meerut the previous winter.

I hurried over, and, as the Irishmen were dragged to their feet, I hastened to help him on to his.

He looked around him for a moment, being slightly dazed, then, as he saw I was about to speak, he hastily lifted his hand in a warning gesture. Then he drew me a little aside :

"Don't say a word to those fellows ! " he said, indicating our captives. "They don't know who I am—and it isn't really their fault."

"But are you hurt, sir ? " I inquired, anxiously.

"What—who—me ? Hurt . . . I don't think so ! "

With a faint smile he felt himself over, tentatively.

"No, not a bit ! I'm perfectly all right—barring a little soreness, of course ! I don't think they really intended to hurt me, anyway—just a little playful, that's all."

I thought to myself that if that was playing I should hate to see those Irishmen when they really meant business ! But of course I didn't say so, and Lieutenant Baden-Powell went on :

"It was really mostly my fault. You see, I was driving along the Mall with a friend, when I saw these fellows shying *kankar* through the chapel window, yonder. So I got down, and told my friend to drive on. Then I went across and ordered those fellows to stop their nonsense—I had forgotten for the moment that I wasn't in uniform, and that these chaps, being strangers, would not have the foggiest notion of who I was ! I expect they thought I was some member of the chapel, or just an interfering busyboy. Anyway, they turned on me, and—well this is the consequence ! But the point is that they didn't know I am an officer, and

I don't want them, or anyone else, to know it either. Do you understand me ? ”

I did, and admired his sporting spirit accordingly. For it is one thing for a mob of soldiers on the rampage to attack a civilian, but quite another thing for them to assault an officer—in uniform or out of it.

“ I'll do my best, sir,” I told him.

“ Good ! And I'll see Captain Pennington tomorrow, and explain it all to him. In the meantime you'll have to put them in the guard-room of course.”

“ Of course, sir.”

“ Very good. But don't forget what I have told you. It serves me right for interfering.”

And with that, having dusted himself down, he walked away as unconcerned as though he'd just been attending a tea-party.

On the way back to barracks our prisoners were vociferous and persistent in their inquiries as to who the little divil of a spalpeen was at all, at all ? But of course, I didn't tell them.

However, on the arrival of the 1st R.I. a few days later, I was called upon to explain the matter in detail to their C.O., and was so closely questioned that I was unable to keep B.-P.'s name out of it.

But he absolutely refused to appear against them, nor did he do so—though I'm afraid their punishment was not much lighter for that.

I saw quite a lot of the Lieutenant during the rest of our stay in Meerut. He was the moving spirit behind the theatricals, which were held in the Station Theatre and his rendering of the tenor parts in Gilbert and Sullivan, then quite new, was that of one who might have made a name as a singer had he not chosen to make one as a soldier.

He gave me another shock in the theatre one day, when I saw him busily painting a woodland scene

on two separate strips of canvas, and painting with both hands at the same time !

I never saw him again after we left Meerut, but years later I heard an echo of this peculiar gift of his. A certain Miss Friend, sister of the Mayor of Mafeking, gave a lecture in 1900 at Newcastle-on-Tyne on the siege. She had, of course, a lot to say about B.-P., and she told us how, when she had asked him for some memento of the occasion, he had pinned a sheet of paper to the table and written his signature, 'R. S. S. Baden-Powell,' with both hands at once, and in parallel lines, each line exactly alike, without lifting either pen from the paper !

B.-P. is, I think, the most remarkable man the British Army has turned out in my time, and that is saying a lot.

CHAPTER XVI

I AM PRESENT AT A REMARKABLE BIRTH

FOR me, our stay in Mcerut was saddened by a parting with many old comrades, for during this period we sent all our 'time-expired' men back to England. These were men who had joined about the same time as myself, and who had been my companions for seven years. Naturally it was something of a wrench, but they themselves were, for the most part, glad enough to go home.

They were replaced by a draft from the 1st battalion, then stationed at Mullingar. After a month's separate training, they joined our ranks, and in February we returned to Chakrata, arriving there about the middle of March, in lovely spring weather, though the winter's snow was still lying in a few sheltered spots on the northern slopes.

During the ensuing summer months I was persuaded by the regimental schoolmaster, Mr. Vasey, to sit for a First Class Certificate of Education, about equivalent to London Matriculation in those days, which I did, successfully. This entailed three months' study, fairly systematically instead of the desultory and random reading I had indulged in hitherto. English history, general geography, algebra, and mensuration were the special subjects I chose from a long list, technical and professional subjects being, of course, obligatory.

This First Class Certificate is necessary for any soldier who aspires to commission, and I was erroneously supposed to have this ambition. Actually,

on the contrary, I felt quite happy where I was. Socially I was among my own kind in the sergeants' mess, with men like Donald Munro and Sergeant-Major Thomson, and I held a position I had made for myself, that of colour-sergeant of a fine company of men whom I understood and liked. And so if, to quote Napoleon, there was a Field-Marshal's baton in my knapsack, I was quite satisfied to let it remain there.

In due course we were ordered to another station, Mian Mir, a few hundred miles away on the plains. This station resembled Agra in many ways, but possessed an unenviable reputation for unhealthiness, which had caused it to receive the unprepossessing nickname throughout the Army of 'the Graveyard of India,' a piece of nomenclature which may possibly be exaggerated, but is certainly not entirely undeserved. It was usual, in those days, not to keep troops there any longer than two years, but in our case, for some occult reason of their own, the Quartermaster-General's department decided to keep us there three.

Some changes took place in the regiment. In November we lost our splendid C.O., Colonel Rowland, and my old mentor of Agra days, Major Pocklington, succeeded him in the command.

Then Sergeant-Major Thomson was sent, early in April 1885 to Mussoorie, up in the hills, with his invalid wife to escape the hot weather. When this happened Colonel Pocklington sent for me, and told me to take over the sergeant-major's duties, and carry them on in addition to my own, which I managed to do, I venture to think, without discredit.

During that hot season I assisted our band-sergeant, Billy Robinson (the same whose leg-breaker twister had been missed by Rowsell and had afterwards so effectually connected with my proboscis) to study for his First Class Certificate,

necessary before he could qualify for Bandmaster. In return he taught me to play the flute, and when he left us to return to England and eventually become Bandmaster of the Hampshires, he gave me a very fine concert flute, which was stolen, years afterwards, from my tent at Rawal Pindi.

There is little to write about until, in May '85, there occurred an incident which has since become one of my most treasured memories.

One evening I was playing billiards in the sergeants' mess when I was called to the door by one of the servants. Not too pleased at being interrupted in my game, I went, and found the orderly officer of the day standing there, accompanied by a civilian.

"This," explained the officer, after having introduced me, "is an old school-fellow of mine—we were together at Westward Ho. Now he has come out to Lahore, where his father is Principal of the College of Art, and he has joined the staff of the *Civil and Military Gazette*."

"A journalist, eh?" I interjected, not quite seeing how all this concerned me.

"Exactly!" said the officer. "Oh, and his name, by the way, is Mr. Kipling."

It seems strange now, looking back over the intervening years and all that has happened therein, to realize that at the time the name meant nothing to me beyond the fact that it was a somewhat unusual one. Apart from that it was as meaningless to me as to the rest of the world.

"Mr. Kipling," went on the officer, "has an idea for turning out something new in writing about military life by getting into direct touch with Tommy Atkins himself. And, in renewing our old school acquaintance, he has asked me to help him. It has occurred to me that you might possibly be of considerable assistance to him, if you would."

"Certainly, sir," I replied. "I shall be pleased to do anything I can for Mr. Kipling. And if I might make a suggestion, it would be that a look round the men's canteen might yield some possibly good results!"

The officer laughed.

"That," he said, "is exactly what I suggested myself, and I have already obtained the necessary permission from the Adjutant."

"Another proof," interpolated Mr. Kipling, "that great minds think alike."

"They have to in this regiment!" laughed the officer. "Because, you see, we've all got great minds." He turned to me: "I shall turn Mr. Kipling over to you, then—and shall rely on you to do your best for him."

"I will certainly do that, sir!"

All the same I didn't feel too enthusiastic about it, being of course entirely oblivious of the fact that I was about to help in making literary history.

The officer left it at that, and went off to attend to his duties. Kipling looked at me with a twinkle in his eye. (I'm pretty sure he had a notion that I was mentally cursing all journalists) and asked:

"Well, what do we do now?"

"How do you like the canteen idea?" I inquired.

"It sounds good enough to me!"

I looked at my watch. "We haven't got too much time," I told him. "The canteens close at nine-fifteen you see, and that only gives us a little over half an hour."

"Oh, I daresay that will be long enough."

"Right you are, then," said I. "Come along."

I led the way across to the canteen which was, at that hour, pretty full and very noisy. The talk was rough, and the language not precisely that of the nursery or even the drawing-room! I stole a quick glance at my protégé to see how he was taking it.

His quick eyes were darting hither and thither, taking it all in, and there was a quiet smile on his face.

"Now," I said, "let's have a look round and see if I can find some likely customers for you."

In a corner I espied a group of 'boozing chums,' seven or eight in number, who I thought might be productive of good material.

The men I selected were all members of what was known as the 'permanent musketry fatigue party,' their duties being to look after the rifle range, targets, butts, etc., and Corporal MacNamara, who was in charge of the party, happened on this occasion to be with them. I knew that this little crowd were a long way from being plaster saints, but I also knew that they were, at heart, very good fellows.

As we threaded our way through the throng towards this group I noticed how very out of place the little, dark civilian looked amongst all those big, brawny, uniformed soldiers, with their skins sun-burned almost to blackness.

But if he felt at all out of place he certainly did not show it. His manner was easy and casual and he seemed to be perfectly at home in an atmosphere that must have been strange to any civilian. His movements were easy, but his head and eyes moved here and there with quick, almost birdlike movements. I saw that he was taking it all in as a sponge will absorb water. Furthermore he did not ask any of the silly, banal questions that the average civilian in such circumstances almost invariably did. It occurred to me that my job of cicerone was not likely to be quite such a bore as I had imagined it would!

Another thing that I noticed was that he seemed to fit in with the men just as well as they fitted in with him. True, he had not yet opened his mouth since we came into the canteen, but usually in such

circumstances, when a civilian manages to get into such a place, the men are apt to resent his presence, and show their resentment by stopping their talk altogether, and just staring at the stranger, or by talking AT him to each other in unnaturally loud voices. On this occasion, however, they just glanced at him and carried on as though he wasn't there. I have thought since that it was this gift, or flair, of his that enabled him to get so close to what I might describe as the inner psychology of the private soldier, where so many others had signally failed.

There are two other writers who, although they had not the genius of Kipling, could write truly and convincingly about soldiers, and draw accurate pictures of military life from the private soldier's point of view. I refer to Robert Blatchford and Edgar Wallace—but both of these had actually served in the ranks themselves, which Kipling, undisputed master of such literature, never did.

We reached the group we were aiming at, and I addressed myself to Corporal MacNamara.

"Corporal," I said, "this gentleman is a newspaper writer, and he wants to be friendly and to pick up a few ideas about soldiers and their ways, to write about in newspapers and books."

The little group paused in their talking and drinking to regard the little man who stood before them. I noticed that their looks were curious but not antagonistic.

"Lumme!" ejaculated one of them. "Wot CAN you write about soldiers like us, anyway? An' if you DID, who'd want to read it? If we was Brigadier-Generals, now . . ."

"That's one of the troubles," put in Kipling quickly. "There's been too much written about Brigadier-Generals, and not enough about ordinary Tommies. And they're much more interesting, really!"

That was the right note to strike. The men missed the usual patronage the 'civvie' quite unconsciously was apt to give them, and his remarks about the Tommy flattered them. All the same I caught a glint in the eyes of one or two, and guessed they were thinking: 'We won't half have a lark with this chap! We'll lead him right up the garden. . . !' This impelled me to issue a timely word of warning, so I said:

"Don't put things wrong if you don't want to be shown up. He doesn't know anything about you, but he wants to learn. You'll do your best to make no difference in your talk just because he happens to be there. He wants to be just friendly."

Here Kipling saw his opening and swooped upon it like a hawk.

"That's right!" he interpolated. "And that being so—what about some beer?"

There was a sort of subdued cheer, and the order was promptly given. I won't go so far as to say that his suggestion was an 'Open Sesame' to their hearts, but at least it swept away the outer barriers with great effect!

I decided that things would go better if I made myself scarce, in view of my rank, so I said:

"Well, boys, I leave it to you not to let either yourselves or the regiment down!" And then, to Mr. Kipling: "Well, sir, I'll leave you to it. And if I can be of any further help at any time, I trust you'll let me know."

And with that I went back to my own mess and forgot all about the incident until, a day or two later I ran into Corporal MacNamara.

"Well," I asked him, "how did you get on with the little civilian the other night?"

"Foine, sir!" replied the Irishman, with a light of enthusiasm in his eyes. "Shure 'tis a proper little

gentleman he is—free wid his beer and talkin' loike one of ourselves, bedad! Though I don't know that he got much out of us, but he says he's coming back to see us again!"

Lieutenant Hill, the officer who had introduced him to me, also told me that Mr. Kipling was very pleased indeed with his little incursion into military life, and proposed to repeat it at the earliest opportunity. He had also expressed his gratitude to me for my help in the matter.

Beyond thinking that MacNamara was right and that our visitor was 'a proper little gentleman, bedad!' I thought no more about it, not having the power to see into the future.

In due course Mr. Kipling's first efforts appeared in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, taking the form of sketches appearing on the opposite sides of the front page, aptly called 'Turnovers.' I read them without knowledge of the authorship and in my opinion they were quite good without being in any way notable.

Kipling came to see me several times after that, and I was always willing to be in any way helpful, but apart from that I regarded the incidents as of no special importance. I repeat that the future was a closed book to me.

It was only when the military sketches, collected under the title of *Soldiers Three* appeared in book form that I immediately recognized Corporal MacNamara as the prototype of the inimitable Mulvaney, and then, although Learoyd and Ortheris were not so easily recognizable, and appeared to be composite characters, I realized that that night in the canteen I had been present at a very remarkable birth—the birth of triplets whose names were to become household words throughout the English-speaking world.

Later Mr. Kipling found a higher position and

greater scope as sub-editor of the Allahabad *Pioneer*, and in a few years, on the strength of such remarkable works as *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, and *Soldiers Three*, he had become world-famous. I have always since then been very proud of my humble share in his ascent of the lower rungs of the ladder of fame, and still am to-day.

Most of his verses I know by heart, and I appreciate them, and recognize the astonishing insight which has imbued them with such absolute realism, as only a soldier serving in India in those days can.

What is, in my opinion, his finest novel, *Kim*, is full of scenes I knew well, and the people typified are very familiar. His Strickland Sahib was a real man, a police officer I knew, and I also knew the small boy Kipling immortalized as the central figure in that delightful short story 'The Drums of the Fore and Aft.'

Kipling wrote, for the most part, of men and scenes quite unfamiliar to the ordinary reader, and it is perhaps for that reason that, in these days, a number of people under-rate and decry his work. He is frequently accused of being a 'Jingo' and a bloodthirsty barbarian, and what-not. That is a point I will not attempt to argue here. But this much I will assert—that whatever his genius and whatever his faults, Kipling will go down to posterity on at least one indisputable count: that he knew more of the psychology of the private soldier of his day than any other civilian ever had, or could have known—and, for that matter, more than most soldiers either! There may have been some of the latter who equalled his knowledge, but they had not the gift to express it on paper, as Kipling had.

I never met him again after those notable days in Mian Mir, but in 1921, when he was on the Graves Commission on the Western Front, I ventured to

write to him, and in due course received a very charming reply, in which he said that he well remembered those old days in Mian Mir and that he had always looked upon the Fifth as his regiment. It was a very friendly and delightful letter, and to-day it is one of my most treasured possessions.

CHAPTER XVII

I GAIN PROMOTION

AN event occurred in this year, 1885, which I feel deserves a place in this humble record. In the mess we took regularly a number of English weeklies, and so had, even though a little late, some sort of chronological knowledge of what was happening at home.

On this occasion a mob of elderly women (mostly, I suspect, spinsters !) stigmatized as the Exeter Hall 'Shrieking Sisterhood,' suddenly became extremely vocal on a subject that seemed to have, for some reason, a special appeal for them.

They discovered that the Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir F. Roberts, actually allowed *registered* prostitutes (they seemed to regard the registration as a special horror) to carry on their trade in the bazaars attached to the barracks of British soldiers !

Horrible !

Disgusting !

Vile, barbaric immorality !

These, and a thousand similar epithets were included in their indignant protests against such a condition of things being allowed to exist under British rule.

Well, it may have seemed like that to them, in their complete ignorance of the ordinary conditions of life in India and the East generally.

It has always been part of the queer, and I regret

to have to say it, hypocritical, attitude of the English in such matters that, although all and sundry know that such things exist, they must be carefully hidden out of sight, and one must PRETEND that they do not exist—an attitude very similar, as a demonstration of intelligence, to that of the ostrich who is supposed to hide his head in the sand at the approach of danger and then imagines that he is invisible.

But in the East things have always been, of necessity, very different. In India woman had always been no more than a chattel, married in her infancy, and on maturity becoming merely another female member of an establishment limited in numbers only by the means (or lack of them) of the male head. There is no legal penalty attached to marital infidelity, but the female offender has no redress if she is found out, and her lord and master visits her person with physical demonstrations of his annoyance. Only the poorest practice anything resembling monogamy and for only that reason.

A woman of the East has nothing else but marriage to do with her life. She has no career open to her other than marriage, and if she had she would not have the capacity to take advantage of it—hence the prevailing infanticide and other evils.

Among all the races of the East the courtesans are recognized members of the community; given a separate quarter of the city to reside in, where they sit at some upper window and advertise themselves and their trade, exactly as described in the Old Testament.

In India the profession is, like all their indigenous trades, entirely hereditary, and comes under the ordinary rules of caste. They laughed at the idea of restrictions being placed upon their trade.

But in England the howlings of the pack of ignorant and bigoted females reached the ears of

Queen Victoria, then sixty-five, and possibly more austere and strait-laced than ever she had been, and it was decided that 'something must be done about it.'

One of the things that the governing classes in England never seem to have realized is that there are three things that human beings, at any rate men, WILL indulge in, and no amount of restrictive laws will ever stop them—or can ever stop them. These three things are gambling, drinking, and fornicating. If these essential failings (if failings they really are) in human nature are recognized, and are dealt with openly, many of the evils attendant upon them can be stopped, or at any rate, ameliorated. But attempts to pretend they do not exist are both ridiculous and contemptible.

Another point that was not recognized in this particular business is that an army—especially an army stationed in a hot, tropical country—without prostitutes available, is likely in a very short time to become a menace rather than a safeguard.

However, there it was—something had to be done, and something was done. And it was, of course, entirely ineffective, the only result being that venereal disease, always so much more drastic and dangerous in its effects in the East than in the West, became far more prevalent.

But, no doubt, the 'Shrieking Sisterhood' were more or less satisfied with what they had done!

Little of note happened during the latter part of '85. There was an increase in sickness, mainly owing to malaria, and in November we went out on manœuvres, part of an enormous concentration of troops, who were split into two opposing armies and who marched and countermarched against each other under precisely the same conditions—other than casualties, of course—that would characterize real fighting: small crowded tents, and no baggage,

to minimize transport ; no regular camping-ground, and no time for loafing or sport ; everything as if we were engaged in real warfare. Very valuable experience, no doubt, but it always seems a trifle futile at the time.

Back in Mian Mir, the following year, '86, brought for me the loss of several old friends—two of them very valued ones.

Orders came through that sergeants and colour-sergcants of twelve years' service could be sent home to fill vacancies on the establishments of militia or volunteer units of the Northumberland Fusiliers. Such positions, on what was known as the 'Permanent Staff' were highly prized, and hitherto had been usually filled from the Home Battalion.

As a result of this order our sergeants' mess lost five members, including my oldest army friend, Donald Munro, who went home to the Militia. Our regular companionship, of nearly nine years' standing, ceased with his departure, and left an unfilled gap in my life. He lived to the age of seventy-five and when he retired from the Army secured the post of electrician at Alnwick Castle, which position he retained to the end.

At the same time another old friend, Sergeant-Major Thomson, left us also, to take up a position as sergeant-major of the Depot at Newcastle. He was a fine soldier and a splendid fellow.

He had been promoted to sergeant-major from colour-sergcant of 'F' Company at the same time as I got my first stripe in '78, so that for eight years he had held a position of importance and distinction in the regiment, where he was most deservedly popular, and his loss was deeply felt, though few I fancy, felt it as much as I did.

He came back to the battalion again in the usual way as quartermaster in 1893, and served through the South African Campaign from 1899 to 1902,

finally retiring at the regulation age of fifty-four in 1905.

His departure meant promotion for me, and I have never been more reluctant to 'take my step.' However, as a matter of routine, I became sergeant-major in place of Thomson, as from 24 May 1886.

Colonel Pocklington spoke to me in a very kindly and complimentary manner when I took over. He said that I was very young to fill such a responsible position, but that that would remedy itself (thus echoing Colonel's Rowland's words on a previous and similar occasion five years before) if I would fill it with the same zeal and energy he had seen proof of in my work as colour-sergeant of 'H' Company.

I have said that I was reluctant to take this promotion, but this, of course, was only because it carried with it the loss of my old friend Thomson. Apart from that I was full of pleasure and hopes, the former much accentuated by the thought of how delighted my people at home would be to hear the news. And they were!

Another drawback to my promotion was that I was reluctant to leave my company, 'II,' the best in the regiment. I had been with it for five years—years which stand out in my memory as being full of the most pleasant incidents and recollections. However, there it was—these little sorrows and regrets seem to be an essential, if unfortunate, component of progress of all kinds.

It seemed to be quite a popular promotion. I had temporarily filled the position before, during Sergeant-Major Thomson's absence, quite successfully. Furthermore, despite my youth, I was next in seniority, and had not been promoted over anyone's head, so no one could have any grouch about it. The sergeants' mess was sincerely congratulatory about it.

A sergeant-major is given separate quarters and I

made myself comfortable with a native to look after my quarters, and my batman occupying one of the rooms. All went well.

Soon after my promotion to sergeant-major, we were joined by a new bandmaster, sent out from Kneller Hall. He was a Mr. Lewis Wallace, who had been brought up from a boy in the band of the 1st battalion. He was a year or two my senior only, and having many tastes in common, and, moreover, being of equal rank, but with separate duties that never clashed, we soon became firm friends. He was an excellent rifle shot, and together we formed part of a team which made a reputation for itself at many rifle meetings.

Wallace brought his wife and two small children out with him, and I was able to help them in settling down in their new home.

Mrs. Wallace, as is so often the way with good women, immediately commenced to take a 'motherly' interest in me, and very soon started to read me lectures about my single state. I was, she pointed out, in a position to give any woman a comfortable home and a respectable position, and, furthermore, I was wasting the best years of my life in a state of 'single wretchedness'!

I was not unimpressed by her arguments, but perhaps the greatest argument of all was seeing the Wallaces so happy and comfortable in their own house.

Fate is a strange thing. . . .

After considerable thought I wrote to Charlotte Nicholson, my old sweetheart, with whom I had not exchanged a word for three years. I told her all about my promotion and the sort of home I could provide. And I finished up by asking her to come out and share my life.

But, of course, quite unknown to myself, things had been moving with Charlotte. There was a Mr.

Richard Varey, who had for years shown his appreciation of her sterling character by begging her to marry him. And now she had at last yielded to his patient but persistent importuning, and had consented to become his wife.

And she actually received my letter on the morning of her wedding day !

As I have said, strange are the workings of Fate.

I was very shocked when I heard what had happened. I would have given much to have spared her the disturbance of that letter of mine at such a time. After all that had passed between us it must have seemed almost like adding insult to injury—although there cannot be anything insulting in sincerely begging a woman to marry you.

Nor, certainly, did she take it as such. She replied with a very sweet letter, in which she first explained all that had happened between herself and Mr. Varey. Then she went on to say that, even had that not been the case, she would never have brought herself to face life in India among the natives, whom she seemed to regard, as so many people at Home did at that time, as dangerous barbarians.

Then she went on to say how proud she was in the knowledge that, when I had attained a high position, my thoughts had come back to her, and my wish had been that she should share it.

Finally she said that she was quite sure I would have no difficulty in finding someone else, and so on.

And so the ten-year story of our love and courtship ended on a very pleasant note, sweet to remember.

I saw the Vareys years afterwards, in 1899, when I was stationed at the Depot in Newcastle. They seemed very comfortable and happy and had one boy, who was then twelve years of age and at

school. He was, most unfortunately killed in 1916, on the Somme.

Charlotte herself died in 1932 at the age of seventy-five, and her husband, Richard Varey, survived her for only five years, dying in 1937, at the age of eighty.

There is little more of any note to tell about the remainder of the year 1886, except that, early in November, the usual draft of time-expired men were sent back to England, and this time included in their number the last of the fellows who had come out with me in the *Crocodile* seven years before.

The draft that came out from home to replace them brought out to us a new game, that of Association Football, to-day, of course, one of the most prominent of all military games.

In the sergeants' mess we also took to a new form of exercise, destined to become amazingly popular in course of time. This was Lawn Tennis, and we first played the game on a court made by smoothing over a sufficiently large space of ground, and then covering the rough surface with a smearing of cow-dung, moistened with water to the consistency of a paste that quickly dried into a really excellent court ! I wonder what the Wimbledon of to-day would have to say to that ?

We were always hoping to get our marching orders from Mian Mir, but they did not come. We spent the whole of 1886 there and 1887 as well, until we commenced to feel that we had been completely forgotten by the powers that be, and were destined to spend the rest of our service life at that unhealthy station.

Of 1887 there is again little to record, except that in July I got a month's leave to Dalhousie, the finest of all the hill stations, in my opinion. But this opinion may, of course, be biased by the fact that it was there, while on this particular leave that I met my future wife.

CHAPTER XVIII

I BID FAREWELL TO SINGLE WRETCHEDNESS!

I ARRIVED in Dalhousie to find the little place in a considerable state of excitement, the occasion being a ball given to the garrison by the English residents in return for similar hospitality.

As I had been on the road all day and all night I wasn't in the best of trim for dancing, and said as much, but they told me I'd just have to go along—it would look discourteous if I didn't—even if I just sat round all the time.

And as that was what I proposed to do, someone kindly introduced me to a Mrs. Buchanan, who also was not dancing. I found her a very charming, condescending and motherly lady of middle-age, and she seemed to take an immediate interest in me, so that I soon found myself taking great pleasure in telling her details of my own life, of my people at home, and so on.

In return she told me something of herself and her family. It seemed that her husband was headmaster of an Advanced School at Gujrat, in the Punjab, a place of about the same size and importance as an average English country town. Both Mrs. Buchanan and her husband, it seemed, had spent all their lives in India, their immediate ancestors having served with the old 'John Company's' Army of pre-Mutiny days. Mr. Buchanan's father had been one of the victims of the Mutiny and Mr. Buchanan himself had been employed by the Government for thirty years in

connection with their scheme of bringing education to the natives in the more considerable towns.

He had been twenty years in Gujrat, coming up into the hills with his family for the summer season, when the plains were too hot. On this occasion the family had come up in advance and Mr. Buchanan himself was due to join them in a few days time. I decided that I should await his coming with a good deal of eagerness and expectancy, for I gathered from Mrs. Buchanan that he was a great scholar, especially in Oriental philosophy, and therefore sounded like a man after my own heart. I have, as a matter of fact, always had a great partiality for schoolmasters, and my host in Dalhousie at the time was one himself, Mr. Vasey, our regimental schoolmaster, who had been appointed to the charge of the Military School at Dalhousie.

But very soon my eagerness to meet Mr. Buchanan was somewhat deflected, for Mrs. Buchanan introduced me to her two daughters, Kate and Lilian.

I am not going to say that I fell in love at first sight, but it will be no exaggeration to state that I was immensely attracted. They were both such charming girls that, despite my tiredness and determination not to dance, I managed one or two with each of them, and felt myself a lucky dog to have the chance, too!

When, about 3 a.m., the dance broke up, I had an inspiration and rather nervously offered to escort the young ladies home. To my barely concealed delight this offer was accepted, and I duly escorted them to their residence, which lay about a mile along one of the hill roads.

What had happened to that exhaustion of mine, which, a little while ago had made it seem an impossibility that I should ever keep awake through the dance, let alone walk a couple of *buckshee* miles just for the sake of politeness?

Before I left the two girls at their home I received, and needless to say accepted, an invitation to tea the following afternoon, so that I found myself walking back to my host's house as though on air!

Mr. Vasey seemed surprised at this remarkable revival on the part of an apparently tired and worn-out man, and when I explained—more or less—what I had been doing with my evening he made no comment, but gave me a quick, rather shy, and smiling glance.

The following day, polished up to my brightest, I kept my tea appointment, and had a delightful time, finally coming away with yet another invitation—this time for a picnic. I was feeling just then that life was almost too good to be true, and India far closer to Paradise than I had ever thought possible.

The picnic was a sheer delight. The spot selected was a wonderfully beautiful one, lying some miles out along the road to Chamba. It was called Khajiar, and was a natural hollow in the mountains, the principal feature of which was a remarkably calm and placid lake, surrounded by a park-like expanse, thickly wooded with pines and deodars on all sides, the whole spot reposing amid a lovely solitude.

A few days later Mr. Buchanan arrived to spend his two months' leave at Dalhousie. My original eagerness to meet him had not led me astray, and in a very short time we had become great friends. We were both imbued with the holiday spirit and, despite the thirty years disparity in our ages, had many things in common, especially books.

My host, Mr. C. F. Vasey, had his day fully taken up with his duties, and his kindly and charming wife had her time almost entirely occupied in looking after their two small children, so that my time was almost all my own. I spent most of it in the society of the Buchanans.

The 10 July occurred just ten days after the commencement of my leave, and it is a momentous date for me, for it was on that day that I took Kate Buchanan aside and put a most important question to her. The answer was in the affirmative and Kate and myself joined the rest of the company in due course to inform them that we were engaged to be married!

They received the news very charmingly and kindly, and with no great show of surprise—so that I was able to spend the remaining almost three weeks of my leave entirely happy in the company of the very sweet girl who was now my fiancée and her people, who most charmingly treated me as one of the family.

We were eventually married from their home in Gujrat, on 28 March 1888, and in the year of grace 1938 we were able to celebrate fittingly the passing of fifty years of happy married life by holding our 'Golden Wedding' in the quaint, old-world sanctity of the Tower of London.

CHAPTER XIX

CAMPAIGNING I

LIFE is always full of ups and downs—which is perhaps as well, since all things get their values by comparison. No man who has not been cold can really appreciate a fire, nor can one who has not known real hunger ever understand the joys of a hearty meal—and so on.

I returned to Mian Mir from my leave, of course about the happiest and most carefree man in the whole of the British Army. But within a short time, I found myself called upon to face a foe calculated to bring a tremor to the heart of the bravest, a foe in fact, more calculated to intimidate the soldier than the civilian, for the former is trained to confront his foe with rifle or bayonet, while this was an enemy against whose ferocity neither bullet nor point were of any avail.

One night in October the men went to their beds as gaily and cheerfully as ever. But on the following morning we were horribly startled by the dread news that two of them were already dead from cholera.

Without loss of time we were turned out of barracks and sent sadly marching away to the cholera camp, some ten miles distant in the jungle-covered country where there were no villages.

That was, I think, one of the most melancholy marches I have ever experienced. We all knew what cholera meant: the suddenness with which it swooped upon its victims, the speed with which it

carried them off, and the agony that had to be endured before the swift end came.

I still remember one night in Peshawar when I walked into the sergeants' mess for a shandy-gaff, and found our paymaster-sergeant, 'Johnny' Hegarty, looking very queer and white about the gills. However he seemed cheery enough. I strongly advised him to have a stiff brandy and soda and then get into bed. He promised to take my advice, and then, as I had to attend a tattoo parade, I was forced to leave him.

Next morning the first thing I learned was that poor Johnny was dead in the night—of cholera.

The phantom pursued us to camp, and soon more of our men were down with the horror. Strangely enough all the earlier cases were fatal, and mostly horribly painful, the victims howling and struggling in their agony until mercifully quietened by the coming of death; which frequently took place as soon as six hours after the first seizure.

One after another they went, until we had lost ten good men, and our days were a horror and our nights even worse. The whole affair was a terrible kind of nightmare.

But with the passing of the tenth man the cases seemed to get less virulent. It was almost as though the dread disease in its first frenzy of destruction had exhausted all its savagery on the early victims. The cases grew fewer and milder, and at last, after the necessary eight days had elapsed without a fresh case, normal life could be resumed.

When we left the cholera camp we did not return to Mian Mir, but took the Grand Trunk Road on the march to a new station, this time Rawal Pindi, spending the rest of the winter season in camp on the Fort Glacis.

Late in March we moved again, this time to a hill-camp named Kuldana, which was a sort of

Chakrata on a small scale, and not so comfortable. My wife came up to us a little later, and we had to make shift in two little rooms at the end of four such, occupied by the armourer-sergeant, bandmaster, schoolmaster, and ourselves. That year, thanks very largely to Captain Pennington, our battalion came out on top of the Musketry Classification for all India—a great honour.

Early in September we received orders to prepare for active service, and there was, of course, much excitement. It seemed that we were to march against a number of hill tribes, who had caused a lot of trouble on the border, culminating in the murder of a British officer—a Major Battye, of the Guides.

Our strength was to be six hundred only, all men specially picked for their physical fitness. The little army of which we were to become a unit was divided into four columns each made up of one battalion of British and two of native infantry, with two seven-pounder mountain battery guns.

We duly set off, with baggage reduced to a minimum, and without tents, to make us more mobile in the difficult country we had to penetrate.

We found we were to form the first column together with the 3rd Sikhs and the 4th Ghurkas. Both these native battalions had the reputation of being 'crack' corps, quite deservedly as we found when we came into contact with them during the operations that ensued.

On 4 October we crossed the border at Oghi, where we left all our spare kit, being reduced to what we could carry—rifle and ammunition, bayonet, water-bottle and haversack, a greatcoat, a blanket, and a waterproof sheet. Our haversacks contained only towel, soap, knife, fork and spoon, tin mug and plate, and a tin of dubbin and rag for our boots.

Not a razor, brush, or pipe-clay pot was allowed - for the time being we were done with 'spit and polish' ! Our uniforms were of cotton drill khaki, and the one pair of boots we wore would have to see us out.

The other three columns assembled at different points along the frontier, and the whole expedition was under the command of General Sir John MacQueen, V.C., Indian Army, who kept in touch with each column by telegraph, and directed our movements from day to day. A reserve column was kept at his disposal.

On this same day, 4 October, we received orders to advance. The enemy consisted of a number of hill tribes living in isolated villages—just rows of huts built into the hill-side one above another. A flat space made the floor, and the hill-side itself formed the back wall.

The whole country, an area of some four hundred square miles, was just one series of ridges and valleys, with narrow paths here and there, and through and through, these paths being made by the goats. The tribesmen possessed absolutely nothing on wheels, and so had no need for roads.

The hill-sides were too steep to walk up directly, so that all the paths slanted and zigzagged about in the most confusing manner.

The enemy themselves were a smallish but very brave and hardy people. We encountered them first on the day we advanced from Oghi. After trailing along in single file up and down those wretched paths, the leading files keenly on the look-out, for several hours, we were suddenly fired upon from a 'sangar' or stone breastwork, built on a spur up which our path at the moment was heading.

Immediately the leading files halted and two companies came up and spread out as best they could into skirmishing order with much slipping

and sliding on the steep hill-side, and a good deal of bad language.

I advanced to the front at the Colonel's heels, and there we saw some rags of banners waving and quite a considerable number of black heads showing above the stone wall.

"What d'you make the distance, Sergeant-Major?" Colonel Vincent asked me.

"Just a minute, sir, and I'll try to tell you," was my reply.

My range-finder was quite useless on such ground, and so I borrowed a rifle and a few rounds of ammunition and, having selected a prominent stone as a mark, set the sights at what I thought, aimed, and fired. I hit the stone the first time! The natives behind the sangar jeered and no doubt thought that our shooting was mighty ineffective!

"Five hundred yards, sir," said I to the Colonel.

"Good," said he, and then ordered independent firing to be opened on the sangar.

At the first few rounds the heads all disappeared behind the wall with remarkable celerity. After a few more we got the order to cease firing. Then, from a parallel ridge some three thousand yards away, we heard the sound of artillery. A moment later a puff of woolly smoke appearing above the sangar marked the bursting of a shrapnel shell from one of the seven-pounders. Three more shells followed the first, and then the artillery also ceased firing.

A few heads appeared momentarily above the wall of the sangar, and then those tattered flags disappeared and we knew that the enemy were in flight.

We got instructions to advance on the sangar in open order, and scrambled up as best we could, very thankful that we hadn't to face a hail of bullets as well as the natural difficulties presented by the rough ground.

We found no one left behind the sangar except seven casualties, the result of the shrapnel's iron hail. We could see the survivors scuttling down the right-hand slope, and we hastened their flight by a few rounds from our Martinis.

Of the seven left in the sangar, three were beyond all human aid, and a fourth had his right thigh horribly smashed, and died soon after our arrival. The other three were patched up by our Medical Officer, and afterwards sent down to Oghi. They struck me as being fine fellows, and full of pluck, for they bore the painful process of probing, bandaging, etc., without displaying the slightest sign of the very considerable pain they must have been enduring. They wore the ordinary woollen clothing of their kind, and were armed with match-lock, muzzle-loading, gas-pipe muskets, with very long barrels, fitted with a primitive stock and butt, exactly similar to those in the Tower Museum, dated sixteenth and seventeenth century.

We communicated with Colonel Sims, who commanded our column, and received orders to continue our advance. We demolished the sangar by simply rolling the stones down the hill-side, and then proceeded to push on—or rather, up and down! But before leaving we placed the dead bodies of the tribesmen where their friends could easily find them, and dispose of them according to their own custom.

We continued our switchback advance without meeting any further resistance, but were pretty exhausted by the time we camped for the night. Carrying thirty pounds of kit and equipment in country of that sort is no great joke.

There was a spring where we camped, and we were able to get a good drink and to fill our water-bottles. A little later the cooks and mules came in, and we were able to have a meal consisting of tea and the residue of the four ration biscuits issued to

each man for a day. Not a luxurious meal, but welcome, since it was the first we had had since six o'clock that morning.

Later in the evening we got another meal—this time four ounces of tinned meat and four biscuits, and (the gift of the gods indeed !) a ration of rum. This was made possible only by the amazing skill and energy of a gang of native roadmakers who had followed close on the heels of the fighting ranks, making the little goat-paths into comparatively usable roads.

Strategically, our position was not too good. The plentiful cover afforded by the uneven hill-sides, plus the aid of darkness, would have made a night attack by the enemy a very easy matter. So we settled down for the night 'all standing,' that is to say every man with his ammunition belts on and his rifle by his side. Not the most comfortable way of sleeping, but we were all mighty tired and had fairly full stomachs, so we made do well enough. Numerous sentries were posted to give warning of any attack, but none came. Wallace and I snuggled down together and passed a fairly comfortable night.

At seven the following morning we breakfasted on tea and biscuits, but were considerably heartened by the sight of a drove of bullocks, which the indefatigable commissariat department had succeeded somehow in driving up during the night and which promised a dixe of beef-stew later on.

The scenery all around us was magnificent in its rugged wildness, but one might have enjoyed it more had one not known that it sheltered a horde of savage foemen.

We got on the way eventually, and it was 'Excelsior' once more. This time the Sikhs led, and we brought up the rear. We established an advanced base at Mana ka Dana, and left 'B' Company to guard it. This was where we had

spent our first night. Then we continued to advance until we reached our stopping-place for the night, Chittabat, where we found the cooks before us and already installed. This time a really good meal, with a tot of rum to wash it down.

We bivouacked on a sort of plateau among the pines—a fine, flat stretch of ground thickly and softly carpeted by centuries of fallen pine-needles. This was the summit of an outlying range, some eleven thousand feet up: cold, but beautifully clear and dry.

Next day came the information that we were not likely to move for some days, and orders to prepare for defence. Fires were allowed. That day the Pioneers, following close behind us, made a good clear road right up, with the pleasant result that we got fresh bread and a first-rate stew with potatoes in it.

We stayed in that plateau for eleven days, making one sortie, or punitive expedition, against a village whose inhabitants had interfered with one of our supply trains.

Only two companies from each battalion were sent, and Wallace and I got permission to accompany them. But we found the village deserted and had to content ourselves by just burning it to the ground. But before this Wallace slipped and badly dislocated his ankle, and I, with an escort, took him back to the plateau—a sufficiently dangerous business, but one that passed off without mishap. Poor Wallace was sent down to base hospital the following day, and never got back to us.

The next day we had the rather remarkable experience of watching some really good fighting, five thousand feet below us—a bird's-eye view indeed! One of our four columns, consisting of a battalion of my old friends, the Royal Irish, and two native battalions, were engaged in the skirmish,

and so clear was the air that we could see practically every movement.

A line of skirmishers could be seen, looking from that altitude ridiculously like toy soldiers, dotted over the flat plain below. They were in open order, with supports following in closer order two hundred yards to the rear. We saw the little puffs of smoke from their rifles, and then, after a surprisingly long time, the reports came faintly to us, sounding like the popping of corks.

There came a pause, and then a swarm of white-clad figures suddenly emerged from the nullah in front of them and swept down upon them in a wild, frantic rush, their white garments streaming behind them as they ran, whirling their long, curved tulwars round their heads, and leaping and bounding in the air like madmen as they charged down on the waiting, almost immobile line of khaki-clad figures.

These new-comers were Ghazis, desperate, blood-thirsty fighters, utterly reckless of their own lives in the comforting knowledge that the certain road to paradise lay at the muzzles of their foemen's rifles.

Now, with the precision of a well-oiled machine the 18th Royal Irish closed their ranks, fixed bayonets, and grew into a sort of half-moon formation, splitting into little groups of eight or ten men. Then every man dropped on to his right knee, and the bayoneted muzzles of the Martinis spouted smoke. The front line, wild and ragged, of the charging Ghazis wavered and crumpled and white figures dotted the ground. Others took the places of the fallen men instantly, only to fall themselves in a moment or two. This happened again and again, but still the Ghazis came on. There must have been three hundred of them at the start of the charge, now more than half were down !

The remnant charged on, still waving their tulwars

as fiercely and defiantly as ever, and no doubt yelling their terrible war-cry of 'Allah, il Allah. . . !' though this of course we could not hear. The continuous rattle of the rifles came to us like the sound of some distant child playing with a wooden clapper.

Brave as the Ghazis were, nothing could stand against that terrible fusillade of lead, and soon there were hardly any of them left, and they were in retreat. Not a single one of them reached the cool, kneeling, khaki figures who dealt out wholesale death with machine-like precision.

And still the Ghazis fell as they ran back for the shelter of their nullah. I don't know whether any of them actually reached it—I doubt it. At that distance the stark figures dotting the plain below looked rather pathetically like a flock of white birds, destroyed in their flight.

It was all over in an incredibly short time. The attack had been a surprise one, and the 18th had stood up to it wonderfully. Had they wavered, or retreated for shelter into the nullah behind them, they would have been lost—destroyed to a man by those terrible tulwars! As it was they lost their Commanding Officer, Major Bailey, in the fight.

After this the campaign became for us somewhat monotonous. We pressed on, day after day, seldom remaining more than a night in any one place, and with very little in the way of incident.

One night one of 'F' Company's cooks, a man named Scott, incautiously allowed himself to be silhouetted against the light of his fire, and a sniper's bullet reached him, so that he fell dead, right across the fire by which he had been cooking the men's dinners. Another man picked up an injured snake, which bit him, and he died of the poison within an hour. Another surprising casualty was the death of Sergeant Michael Gordon, from pneumonia. He was one of the biggest and strongest men of the

regiment, weighing sixteen stone, and end man of the regimental tug-of-war team.

Such were the incidents which 'relieved' the tedium of our daily advance until, on 1 November, we found ourselves face to face with what looked like an impassable barrier. It was a sort of broken cliff, about two thousand feet in height, and stretching away on either side into the distance. I learned later that it was a geological malformation and stretched for miles.

We found a spot with a slope of about sixty degrees and so dotted with scrub and low brushwood that it was not impossible for an active man to climb. And presently in open order, and with our rifles 'slung' so as to keep our hands free, we essayed the climb. There was some desultory firing from the top, but no one was hit.

A signaller picked up a message from the Brigadier at the rear, and the Colonel was a bit puzzled as to how to convey it to Major Cherry, leading the advance. I volunteered to take it, pointing out, however, that it would be almost impossible for me to get back.

Our collective advance was slower than any individual one could have been, because of the necessity of keeping together and so, alone, I was easily able to push on ahead and eventually deliver my message to the Major. After that I went on climbing with him, in advance of the main body.

After about three hours of this 'go as you please' progress, the Major and I reached the summit, almost together. For a few minutes we were there, quite alone—the enemy having, as usual, bolted as soon as we commenced to get to close quarters. The top of the cliff looked almost like an English meadow, flat to right and left and with a slope backwards, but not steep.

After a few minutes a handful of men reached the

top, amongst them Lance-Corporal Hay, of the Signallers. I called to Hay and Major Cherry sent a message down to General Channer.

More and more men came up and by four o'clock the whole battalion was assembled on the summit.

Then came a message of congratulation from the General and a request for the names of the first ten men up, which was referred to Major Cherry, as he was actually the first to arrive.

The Major turned to me with a smile and said :

"Look here, Sergeant-Major, I can't appear in this myself, but do you mind if I put you down? As a matter of fact you were the first I saw."

"Well, sir," I answered, "I hadn't any business to be there either!"

We had a laugh over that, and then prepared a list of the first ten we had seen arrive, headed by the name of Lance-Corporal Hay.

The sequel was that, in 1889, when Hay had gone home to the Reserve, and was living in Edinburgh, a big parade was ordered one morning to witness the presentation to Lance-Corporal Hay of the medal for Distinguished Conduct in the Field, 'he having led his Battalion in a dangerous and difficult operation' and so on. The most important part of it all to William Hay being an additional sixpence *per diem* on his pay, which was, no doubt, quite useful to him!

Late that afternoon we advanced once more, not feeling too cheery, in view of the fact that we had left the mules, with our reserve ammunition, rations, etc., down below, and very few of us had anything left in our haversacks!

So we had a thin time when we eventually bivouacked for the night, and the loss of the rum ration was an especial deprivation, in view of the intense cold.

Next morning we remained where we were, and sent a strong party back to help get the mules and supplies along. But they came back empty handed, and 2 November was a very real fast day to us ! Luckily there was plenty of water, but that was about all we got.

On the 3rd we were ordered to advance into the valley, as it was important we should reach the villages before the natives had cleared everything out in order to make our reprisal effective.

The valley, when we reached it, was broad and well cultivated, with villages dotted here and there. These we found to be deserted, and burnt them, blowing up everything of a substantial nature.

In this way we took and looted the considerable village of Pokul, in which we found a tower of solid brickwork, filled with grain and maize, which the enemy had been unable to take away with them, also a store of honey which the men enjoyed mightily. My share of the loot consisted of a copy of the Koran and a kitten—the latter a tiny creature for which I found a home in my haversack.

About two in the afternoon we received orders to return, and knew that we were now retiring. The tribesmen had, for the most part, managed to elude us, and, except for the loss of their villages and some of their supplies, would have to go unpunished for their misdeeds.

And with the cessation of the excitement of advancing, came loss of energy, too. We had been living on mighty short rations for the last few days and commenced to feel weakness creeping over us as we reluctantly faced a climb of three thousand feet back to bivouac.

But, luckily, we had hardly started before we were met by a convoy of mules, carrying reserve ammunition and an issue of rum.

I think that the rum ration saved the day : but

for it I doubt if many of the men would have been able to make the steep ascent back.

Colonel Vincent's little black Yarkandi pony had been sent down to him, and by the time we got into camp it was carrying two exhausted men on its back, with two more hanging on to its stirrup-leathers, and Corbett, the bugler, clinging to its tail! Colonel Vincent walked.

When we got near our bivouac some of the men left behind came down to help the worst of us in, and when we got there about the first person I saw was the Adjutant, Captain Buchanan, waiting for me with a bottle of Bass in his hand.

But the pervading smell of stew put fresh heart into all of us and we felt at peace once more.

We were not, however, permitted to retain that feeling for long, for that night the enemy, realizing that we were retiring started to harass us and continued to do so until we were out of his country. It was when we were quite close to the border that we sustained our last casualty—a private named Phillips. Some of the enemy managed to creep up close enough to plug a handful of iron slugs into the poor fellow's back. A ghastly sight!

On the 6 November we got back to our base at Oghi, looking like anything in the world but a battalion of British soldiery! Not one of us had had a shave since the 16 October, nor a wash! Furthermore, our clothing had suffered pretty severely and in most cases our trousers ended in a festoon of rags just below the knees! One blessing was that our boots were good, and had lasted out splendidly. Also, despite our almost incredibly hairy and dirty condition, we were all as hard as nails, and as healthy as could be.

So ended the Hazara Expedition of 1888—just a part of service routine in India, and without any special honour or glory for any concerned. Nor

any reward, for that matter, except that entailed in getting back to the comparative comforts of barrack life after the very decided DISCOMFORTS of life in the field, chasing continually after a too-elusive enemy.

In addition to which I, in common with all who took part in that expedition received in due course a medal with clasp inscribed : 'Hazara, 1888.' Alas ! there are not many left alive who are entitled to wear that medal to-day !

CHAPTER XX

THE FIRST CHOLERA INOCULATIONS

AFTER the Hazara Expedition we returned to our station at Rawal Pindi, but this time lodged in barracks. My wife joined me there and in January I became a very proud man indeed, thanks to the arrival on the scene of our eldest son, named John Buchanan.

This year (1889) was saddened for me by the news that my mother had died at the age of fifty-two. So her sad prophecy came true, and we never met again after I left England. That is one of the greatest regrets of my life.

In 1890 we moved up to the hills once more—this time to a place called Gharial, where my second son, Andrew William (so named after his two grandfathers) was born. In October we took the road again, *en route* for Nowshera, a station in the Peshawar Valley. Nothing of any moment happened there, except that in the winter season we had another little experience of active service, this time against the Miranzais, another hill tribe who had become troublesome. But on this occasion we were only held in reserve, with nothing to do but to sit tight and await events.

My friend Wallace, the bandmaster, and I killed a lot of time by roaming about exploring the country, and on one of these expeditions we discovered the remains of a very large Buddhist monastery, dated about 250 B.C. and named Takht i Bhai (the Seat of the Brethren). It was very interesting.

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Soon after our return to Nowshera I witnessed an amazing phenomenon in the shape of a plague of locusts. They covered a space of miles, and ate everything green or edible during their stay of a week—and left the country absolutely bare and stark. They even ate the curtains, carpets, and matting in the barracks !

In 1891 we were ordered to garrison Peshawar, the very large and important station close to the famous Khyber Pass.

It was here that I had my first experience of those amazing people, actually members of a number of tribes, but commonly known under the generic name of Pathans.

I would like to be able to give some idea of these strange people, but I have neither the skill nor the space, and furthermore am warned by the example of so many writers who have so signally failed in such attempts.

Let it suffice that they are as kindly, hospitable, and generous as they can be to any stranger who craves their hospitality for the night, and that they will set him on his road the next morning with the utmost courtesy—and then think nothing of following him and knifing or shooting him as soon as he is off their land !

Always at war with other tribes, fifty years ago their greatest need was always rifle and ammunition, and they would go to almost any lengths—run almost any risk—to acquire them.

Even the arms racks in the barracks were not safe, and had to be continually kept under lock and key, as well as guarded by armed sentries. And even then . . .

Well, I clearly recall being startled by the sound of a shot one night. I immediately ran to the Quarter Guard to find out the cause of the alarm, and was then shown the body of Private Mitson,

of 'E' Company, lying on the ground at his post by the Magazine, with wounds gaping horribly in his back. He had been attacked and horribly murdered for the sake of his rifle and ten rounds of ammunition.

These Pathan 'loose-wallahs' as they were called, would roam about at night like predatory animals, stark naked except for a liberal coating of coco-nut oil, which made it almost impossible to hold them, and with their knives in their teeth.

No one was safe from them. One night one of our officers was awakened in the night by a light in his room, and found one burly Pathan sitting on his chest, with a knife in his hand, while another was ransacking his belongings!

On another occasion I was aroused by a lot of shouting, and, dashing into 'C' Company's room to see what the row was about found that they had collared one of these marauders, and, despite his greasy hide, had got him down by sheer weight of numbers. I think they would have finished him off, too, if I hadn't warned them of what would happen if he died from their maltreatment of him. He was pretty well done for as it was.

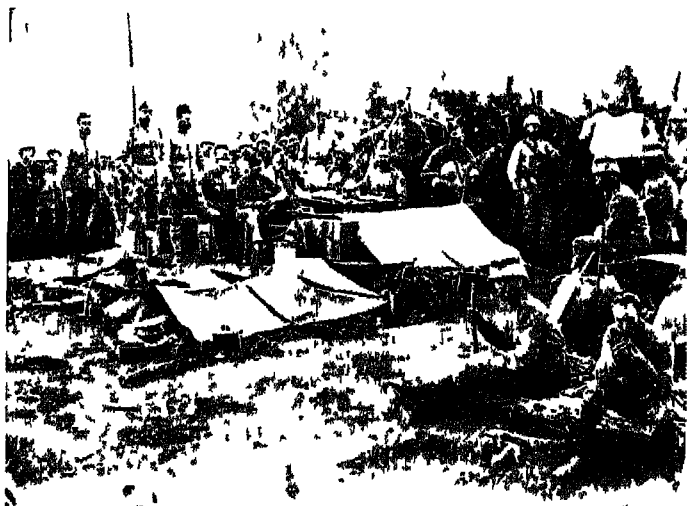
That year I passed the 'Lower Pushtu' language examination and took a month's leave up to Dalhousie with my wife's people.

On returning to barracks I had another glimpse at the complex character of the Pathan, who has an amazing love for children. This in the person of a huge Pathan, named Bucktobur, who would beg to be allowed to play with my youngsters, and who would allow them and other children to do as they liked with him, laughing his great, deep-throated laugh the while, as delighted as they were with the fun.

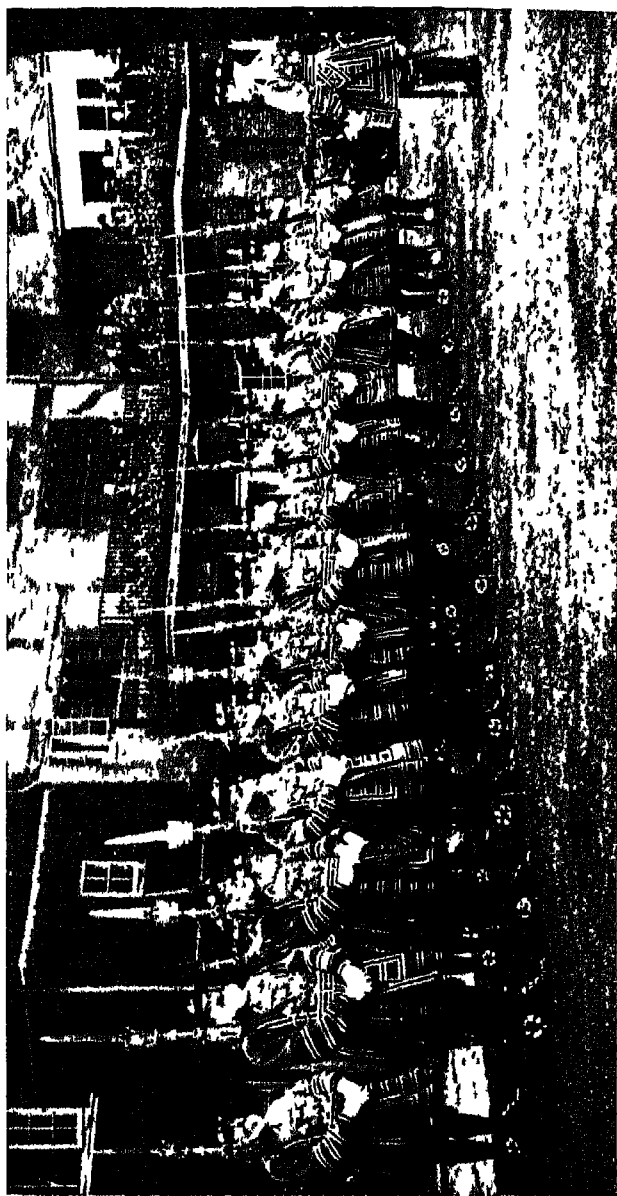
In February '92 I applied for six months' leave to England, and got it, taking my wife and family



SITAPUR, 1894
 REMAINS OF THE BATTALION THAT LEFT CHATHAM,
 DECEMBER 1879 JOHN FRASER SEATED ON LEFT



A BIVOUAC IN THE BLACK MOUNTAINS CAPT
 PENNINGTON IS SEATED AT THE TABLE



Harold Cover

THE YEOMEN GAOLERS OF THE TOWER, 1938

with me. After numerous and very irritating delays, we got a passage on a little 1700-ton steamer, the *Almora* of the British India Line. We had a bad passage, encountering a typhoon in the Indian Ocean that came near to sinking us. We also lost five days at Aden, and six more in the Red Sea, but despite all our discomforts—and they were many—we were more than amply rewarded when at last we got a glimpse of the shores of our native country. This was a first glimpse, too, for my wife who, although of British nationality, had lived all her life in India.

How sweet are those views of England's 'green and pleasant land' only the long-exiled can appreciate.

We reached London just in time to see the last performance of the 'Military Assault-at-Arms' at the Agricultural Hall, the precursor of the modern Military Tournament at Olympia, but a far less elaborate affair. Soldiers in those days were just soldiers—not pageant actors as well! The show consisted only of displays of acrobatics, gymnastics, and skill in the use of arms, given by the pupils of the Aldershot Central Gymnastic School, and various individual performers.

I was particularly interested because my brother, Sandy, a corporal of the 1st battalion of 'Ours' was one of the leaders of the pupils.

We stayed a week or two with my sister, Ellen, at her home near Victoria Park, and then went on to stay with my father in Gateshead. After fifteen long years, what a meeting was that. . . !

We visited Berwickshire, and I revisited the scenes of my boyhood. My grandmother, three uncles, and two aunts were all there, living within a few miles of each other. I was an object of great interest to them, but only after my wife, who I think, they had imagined would be a black lady!

We had a fine time, and got safely back to Nowshera late in November, where I found everyone much as I had left them, except that Colonel Vincent had completed his four years in command and Major Way had been appointed to succeed him.

One Sunday morning, in March '93, we had a rather alarming experience. Together with the 3rd battalion of the Rifle Brigade, we attended Church Parade service in force, our numbers fairly packing the Garrison church.

Then, just as the padre was climbing the stairs of the pulpit, I had a queer feeling that the ground was moving beneath my feet. At first I thought I was ill, then I saw that others had noticed the phenomenon also. Next there came a most sinister sound of rumbling from beneath the earth and we saw the whole building commencing to sway like a cardboard house in a wind, while great chunks of plaster and clouds of dust fell on us from the roof.

Then came a sharp cry of :

“ It's an earthquake ! ”

On that there was a general stampede to get out of the building. Men who will face a human foe without flinching can be excused for feeling terror at such a devastating phenomenon as an earthquake, and the notion of being buried alive is no pleasant one.

On this occasion there might have been some serious casualties had the men tried to get out through the doorways. But, luckily, the sides of the church were formed of open spaces, with columns in between and just a low wall.

And so on one side the Riflemen, and on the other the Fusiliers, could be seen leaping over the low walls, rifles in hand, and looking amazingly like a lot of ants disturbed from their nests !

My concern was to get my wife and little Jack (now aged four) out in safety. But she was perfectly cool and I had no difficult task.

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As though it had only been done to scare us, the rumbling and shaking died away almost as soon as we were out of the church, and eventually we formed up and marched back to barracks in good order. Later we heard that the Roman Catholics had had an even more terrifying experience, for the end wall of their church had completely collapsed—luckily outwards!

I now have to relate one of the most interesting experiences of my life.

At Cherat, a little hill station near Peshawar, early in July '93, orders were received from Brigade Headquarters for us to provide facilities for a student named Haffkine to prosecute certain researches into a preventive treatment for cholera. Every assistance he needed was to be given, including the attendance of men willing to be treated experimentally.

As garrison sergeant-major, most of the routine work fell on my shoulders, but I did not mind, for from the beginning I was very interested.

Dr. Haffkine duly arrived, and was pleased with all the arrangements I had made. He made himself very friendly.

The men were briefly notified, through the medium of the 'Daily Orders,' of their opportunity to receive inoculation against cholera, and as that fell disease is always something of a bugbear to the troops, they turned up in force. I also made it my duty to be present.

Dr. Haffkine gave them an informal lecture on cholera, its cause and possible cure, and explained to them that his efforts were experimental, and that if they were to be successful eventually each man must carefully note and report such symptoms as made themselves apparent to him.

Eventually a number of men received the inoculation, and after a few days the doctor took his departure. He was to make his second visit in about three

weeks. Before he went he told me something of his research work.

He was of Jewish parentage, born in Russia. He had studied and graduated in bio-chemistry, and had afterwards specialized in germ-carried diseases, and eventually in cholera, for which he sought a serum cure.

After a lot of hard work and experimenting, he thought he had discovered this. He approached the British Government in India, to whom he explained and demonstrated his theory. In the end they gave him permission to visit the various garrisons, and to experiment on such soldiers as would volunteer for the purpose.

His research work had led him to believe that some men were able to resist this type of disease to the extent of being quite immune, and a second visit to each garrison was necessary to sort out these from his patients, also to give the less self-protected men a second dose of the serum.

In our case, within a few days of inoculation quite a number of the men inoculated were suffering, some quite slightly, others more severely, from gastric disturbance.

On his second visit, some three weeks after his first, Dr. Haffkine got me to collect all the men he had inoculated. Those who had suffered at all he persuaded to undergo a second inoculation, and gave them instructions as to reporting any further symptoms. Every case he made most careful notes of.

He then took his second departure. No one seemed at all the worse for their second dose, and there was no unusual sickness.

Eventually Dr. Haffkine was appointed to the Indian Medical Service, and his anti-cholera treatment became compulsory for all soldiers and Government officials serving in India. It was also extensively used by civilians.

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I have mentioned this at some length, because I believe it to be the first time in which any form of preventive inoculation, other than ordinary vaccination, was used in the Army.

There is little doubt but that Dr. Haffkine's treatment did much to reduce the spread of cholera amongst the troops, and a few years later Dr. Ronald Ross did much the same thing in regard to malaria, mainly by making war on the germ-carrying mosquito. Since then, of course, inoculation for all sorts of diseases, such as typhoid and enteric, has become common in the Army.

During September my wife and I had another addition to our family, this time in the person of a daughter, named Catherine Ellen, after her own mother and mine, and during November we got orders for another change of station, this time to Sitapur, in the Central Provinces. But only half a battalion went there eventually, the other half going to Benares, on the River Ganges.

The Benares section left by train on 3 December, the other half, with Headquarters, leaving the following day, and marching the whole distance of 808 miles, covering seventy-two marching days, in the course of which we passed through ten important cities, and crossing seven large rivers, finally reaching Sitapur on 3 March.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GRAVES COMMISSION

EARLY in the following year we got notification of our next move—this time right out of India, to Singapore, in the Straits Settlements. We had by then spent fifteen years moving from place to place in the Punjab and the North-West. Apart from travelling by train, I estimated that we had, in that time, marched over three thousand miles!

Our personnel, being mainly short-service men, had of course been changed over and over again, and of the original battalion that had come out in the old *Crocodile* there were left, besides myself, only 2 officers, 3 sergeants, 1 corporal, and 4 privates.

But there were a total of 232 men who had come out to us to remain in India for ever. Their graves lay scattered along our various routes and stopping-places up and down the country.

One of the officers suggested that it was a crying shame and a disgrace to our sense of comradeship that these graves of brave men serving their country and dying in that service, should remain unmarked, and as a result several of the officers, headed by Major G. Hart-Dyke, got together to see whether something could not be done about it.

And the result of this was the first Graves Commission—a term that now, since the Great War, is familiar to almost everyone, but that at that time was unheard of. Soldiers were cheap, and of no great account to anyone. If they died, they could be

buried and left, with nothing to mark their last resting place !

But we decided to alter all that.

The first step was to get in touch with officials at the various places where we had left our dead, and the result was very satisfactory. Only in the case of Agra, where we had left thirteen of our number, and two other isolated places, was it found impossible to locate the exact site of the graves.

The next thing was to raise funds. It was agreed that every N.C.O. and man should contribute his St. George's Day pay (a pretty touch, that !) to a ' Graves Fund,' the necessary balance being made up by the officers. A sort of committee was formed to handle the money, and I was appointed general clerk, etc., to the committee.

My first job was to go to Cawnpore, some seventy-five miles away, to arrange with an iron foundry there for the necessary work. I interviewed a Mr. Robert White, principal owner and manager, who proved to be a brother Scot, and who expressed himself perfectly willing to undertake the work. He put in an estimate of cost, which was duly approved and accepted.

The memorial decided upon was a plain iron cross, three feet high, with the regimental number, rank, name, company, regiment, and date of death inscribed on a small marble tablet, made separately and bolted on to the cross in each case. The upper projection of each cross bore the regimental crest, St. George and the Dragon, and the regimental motto, '*Quo fata vocant.*'

An important point was that these memorials should be durable and should be made to stand the test of time as well as the risk of being stolen to make slugs with, or for some such purpose—as was quite possible in some parts of the country !

With this idea in mind we had the crosses made

so that each had imbedded in it a thick iron rod, with a screw at the end so that it could be bolted to a square iron plate, and the whole imbedded in solid concrete. We tested this method in the foundry yard, and decided that it would take little short of an earthquake to shift the crosses once they had been erected in this way !

In due course our 217 crosses were ready, as were a similar number of the marble memorial tablets, which latter had been made by a firm of monumental masons in Cawnpore.

All this of course was more or less routine work, and comparatively easy. But the business of getting each cross to its right destination (there were about twenty different places) and after that seeing that it was erected over the proper grave, presented a more difficult problem.

It was obviously necessary that the work should be supervised by someone who was familiar with all the details, and, as I have indicated, there were not many such left in the regiment.

Eventually, by general consent, I was asked to take this task on, and agreed to do so.

It was, however, decidedly a job. The bodies of our dead lay at such places as Peshawar, Nowshera, Rawal Pindi, eight in the cholera camp near Mian Mir, four at Oghi, our base during the Hazara expedition, and several more at such scattered hill-stations as Thopa, Gora Dakka, Kuddanna, Gharial, and in Murree itself—and the erection of every cross I should have to personally superintend.

My first job was to send the various batches of iron crosses to their different destinations—thirty-three to Peshawar, seventeen to Nowshera, twenty-one to Rawal Pindi, and so on. I first saw these consignments off by rail, and then commenced a tour of the different places to superintend their erection and see that the native workmen planted

them in their concrete beds strictly according to specification.

It was a strange and melancholy job, for all of these men had been known to me personally, and some of them had been well-liked comrades.

However, I got through with it at last, and was able to report that all the memorials had been properly and permanently erected.

And they were, too! Thirty years later the 2nd battalion of 'Ours' covered pretty well the same routes as we had done, and they saw to it that the regimental crest and motto was regilded on each cross. And at later dates since I have been told by men who have seen them that those iron crosses still stand, defying interference either from man or nature to shift them—a fitting memorial for gallant men who died in the service of their Sovereign and Country.

Such is the story of the First War Graves Commission.

CHAPTER XXII

HOME ONCE MORE

BY the middle of October I had finished my work on the 'Graves Commission' and reported back to Headquarters for duty. My wife and family came down from Dalhousie, where they had been staying during the hot season, and at the end of November the regiment duly set out for Singapore.

Our other half from Benares joined us, and we embarked at Bombay, from whence I had my last glimpse of India, which will always be full of happy memories for me. True, she had been kind to me. She had given me a good time and a good wife, and good health—and what more could a man wish for?

I have been told that my health was remarkable, seeing the length of time I served in India, and am sometimes asked how I can account for it, and what is my advice to others in this connection?

Not an easy question to answer. I never took any special care of my health, and so suppose I was either very hardy, or very lucky—perhaps a bit of both. And as to my advice, I can only suggest to any young man going to serve in India that he do the same as I did—be moderate in both eating and drinking, keep away from the bazaar women, and take as much exercise as possible—especially walking.

Life in Singapore was easy—the mosquitoes were the worst trouble—and passed without incident worthy of record. Except that I lost a good friend

when Q.M.S. James ('Spinner') Thomson died, the climate being responsible.

At last we were ordered home, and after two years of soldiering in the Far East we embarked on the S.S. *Cephalonia* homeward bound, on 6 November 1896.

Seventeen years had made a great difference in steamship travelling, and our voyage home was a great and pleasant contrast to our outward one in the old *Crocodile*.

It was like a holiday, and my wife and our three youngsters, now respectively, three, six, and eight years of age, quickly recovered from the depressing effects of the Singapore climate during a very pleasant voyage.

We landed at Portsmouth on 7 January 1897, and were stationed for a time at the Verne Citadel, on Portland Island. Old England welcomed us typically with about equal thickness of fog and snow, but for all that it was good to be home again!

Colonel Hart-Dyke retired, and my old Captain of Chakrata days, now Colonel Pennington, assumed command. I was given six weeks' furlough, and we went to my father's home in Gateshead once more.

One event of that year is worth recalling. In order to stimulate recruiting amongst the young men of Northumberland, a recruiting march of a fortnight's duration was ordered during July. Colonel Pennington got together about four hundred rank and file, with the band and drums, to march through the most populous districts of the county, camping at nights at such places as Whitley, Alnwick, Hexham, etc.

We made a fine show of it, but it is interesting to record that the total result of that fortnight's hard marching and display work was precisely fifteen new recruits, of whom eight were already serving in the ranks of the Militia Battalion!

In 1898 we took part in extensive manœuvres on Salisbury Plain ; then went back to Portland, where, in October, there came to me the sad news of my brother Sandy's death from sunstroke, while in Egypt.

An old 2nd battalion friend, Sergeant Peter Walton, sent me a kindly letter, giving particulars, in the course of which he wrote : ' . . . I can assure you that everyone in the regiment knows that he has lost a faithful friend and a dear companion. . . . ' Captain F. C. Turner also wrote to me : ' . . . I can hardly tell you how everyone grieves at his death. I knew him very well indeed, and feel thoroughly what a good soldier has been lost to my company.'

Late in January 1899 I applied to be transferred to the regimental Depot at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and my application was granted. And so I came to leave the battalion I had served with for nearly twenty-two years—not, as may be guessed, without many regrets.

Duties at the Depot were mainly concerned with the training of recruits. Quite easy and pleasant. I found many changes in the city since my errand-boy days there, which seemed a very, very long time ago. John, our oldest son, joined the choir of St. Thomas's Church as I had done thirty years before.

We were kept pretty busy at Newcastle with recruits for South Africa, where both the battalions of the Fifth were fighting (see chapter on Regimental History). We had to send out drafts to replace their casualties - a rather melancholy business, but one that occasionally had its lighter moments. As, for instance, the case of Private Docherty.

In March 1900 a detachment of Leinster and Munster Fusiliers, militiamen, arrived at the Depot, it being our business to polish them up in musketry and generally smarten them up as best we could,

and then send out a draft of two hundred of them to Africa to join our 2nd battalion.

At 11 p.m. on 23 April, when they were paraded before being marched to the special train awaiting them, there was found to be one absentee -Private Docherty, of the Munsters.

I sent the provost-sergeant round to search for the missing man, and in case of accidents, put a substitute in his place in the ranks. The special train was due to leave the Central Station at midnight and we marched the men down there in good time -still without Private Docherty.

We had got all the men safely packed into their compartments, when I heard a shout from the foot-bridge overhead, and saw that it was the provost-sergeant, with Private Docherty, his kit-bag on his shoulder.

As he had been settled up with, and his papers were amongst the other, I decided to let him go in place of the substitute, especially as the provost-sergeant explained to me that Docherty had returned to barracks on his own, sober enough to be looking everywhere for his kit-bag and his special chum, Paddy Doyle. It was for this reason that the sergeant had brought him along to the railway station instead of clapping him in the guardroom as an absentee from draft a serious offence.

So I hauled the substitute out from his compartment, and ordered Docherty to take his place :

"But not in there, sorr!" he immediately protested. "Ye see, sorr, I want Doyle -Paddy Doyle sorr -ye'll be knowin' him?"

And then, peering into the dim compartment :

"Are ye there, Doyle? Are ye there, Paddy, me bhoy? . . ."

But Doyle was not, and I was just about to shove him forcibly into the compartment, as the train was about to start, when he wrenched himself from my

grasp and started to run frantically along the platform, calling into each compartment as he went :

"Sure, 'tis Paddy Doyle I'm wanting'. . . Are ye there, Paddy? . . . Doyle! Doyle!"

So he ran the whole length of the train, plainly in abject terror of missing his chum, calling for Doyle into every compartment.

At last, just as the train was getting under way, he found Doyle in the very last carriage—next to the engine—and then, with a wild shout of: "Hiven be praised, Oi've found ye at last, Paddy!" he scrambled into the compartment at the imminent risk of his neck.

The story has a sad sequel, for both the fellows, Doyle and Docherty, died in South Africa of enteric. I was never able to find out whether they died at the same time and place, but somehow I feel sure they did. At any rate, I hope so!

It was in 1896 that I heard of the death of an old veteran of the 5th, one Q.M.S. Kett, who had for years been serving with the Yeomen Warders of the Tower of London.

At that time there was a strict rule that only one man from each regiment was allowed to serve with the Warders at a time. Other rules regarding this singular service were as follows :

Applicants must belong to the Army (including the Engineers, R.A.M.C., R.A.O.C., and R.A.S.C.), must be above the rank of sergeant, must have at least twenty-one years' service, carrying with it a pension, and must have an exemplary character on discharge, and be highly recommended by their commanding officers, through whom an application must be made *before discharge*.

In 1896 I had still six years of service before me, but I believe in looking ahead as well as behind, and I decided that, as I seemed to be eligible for this most coveted appointment—for inclusion in the

ranks of the Yeomen Warders of the Tower of London is the Mecca of all old soldiers who do not crave to return to civil life --I would get my name put on the list.

I duly made my application, accompanied by a most flattering recommendation from my commanding officer, Colonel Way, and the application was accepted. I was placed on the roll.

That, however, did not mean that I was certain of my place amongst the Yeomen. If, for instance, my name had not crept to the near-top of the list of waiting by the time I took my discharge, it would be removed from the roll. And there were other things that might have prevented my final selection. However, in 1900, while I was still serving at the Depot, I received an intimation from the Constable of the Tower, that my name was now included in the first eight on the roll, and that I might be called on to fill a vacancy at any time.

This was good news indeed for me! For some time the spectre of compulsory discharge on reaching the service limit of twenty-five years in July 1902 had been rather haunting me. I had been wearing a uniform too long for the prospect of a return to civilian life for the rest of my days to be at all pleasing to me.

But now I realized that the danger was past, and I heaved a sigh of great relief!

CHAPTER XXIII

I BECOME A YEOMAN WARDER

THE position of a Yeoman Warder is regarded by all old soldiers as a 'cushy' one for very excellent reasons.

In the first place, owing to the stringent rules as regards rank, length of service, and recommendation by officers, the weeding out process is so drastic that the men finally chosen for the ranks of the Warders are, in a sense, the very salt of the old army men, remarkable for their varied experiences in the service, and the tests of character, ability, education, and intelligence which they have had to undergo successfully before reaching a rank on discharge that makes them eligible. That means that any man joining their ranks will inevitably find himself in company entirely suited to his taste.

From the more severely practical angle the position carried with it many benefits also. The Yeomen Warders who do duty at the Tower are provided with suitable quarters in the Tower itself free of rent or rates, although each one of them ranks as a ratepayer of the Borough of Stepney, with all the privileges thereof. Those who become superannuated remain on the roll, with a small addition to their army pension, but are not called upon for any active duty.

The wives and children of the Yeomen (though it is not, as some imagine, compulsory that they shall

be married men) are accommodated also in the Tower with them. The children attend the nearest L.C.C. school.

Furthermore, when the Warder's duties for the day are over, whatever they may be, he is free to go where he will without any sort of restriction.

I have now spent over thirty-five years in the Tower, and I still cannot imagine any more pleasant or comfortable life for the soldier whose fighting days are over.

My call came rather sooner than I expected, and in July 1902, in the last month of my army service, I was summoned to the Tower to be 'sworn in.' Almost twenty-five years to the day, after I had tremblingly taken an oath to serve Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, as a soldier, I smilingly repeated practically the same promise to serve His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, as a Yeoman Warder of His Majesty's Tower of London. It is strange how often in one's life history repeats itself.

The first oath was taken before a Justice of the Peace of the Borough of Newcastle-on-Tyne. That Justice of the Peace was a Mr. John Burrill, and the oath was taken in the drab surroundings of his little back shop. The second one was taken in what is probably the grandest historical building in all Britain, solemnly administered by a very dignified old officer of the Fifth, General Sir Brian Milman, K.C.B., then Governor of the Tower, who very warmly congratulated me on the honourable position to which I had that day attained, and handed me a very imposing-looking warrant, engrossed upon parchment.

This warrant, having gravely urged me 'to behave myself as becometh a loyal servant of His Majesty, his heirs and lawful successors,' went on to inform me that I was 'to receive the wages and

fees, profits incident to the said office . . . ' etc. etc.
Also that :

' Among divers others you are superseded from arrest, you may not be restrained of your liberty or detained prisoner without leave from me. You are likewise exempted from bearing any Parish office as Churchwarden, Constable, Scavenger or Collector, or the like. Neither are you chargeable with any kind of taxes or payments. You are not to be empanelled on juries, or to give your attendance at Assizes or Sessions, neither are you to watch or ward, or pay for doing such duties, with divers other privileges not herein particularly mentioned which as His Majesty's servant you may justly pretend to enjoy, which said place of Yeoman Warder or Waiter of the Tower, together with all profits, emoluments, commodities and privileges above specified and thereunto belonging, you are to hold possess and enjoy for and during the Royal Will and pleasure of our Sovereign Lord the King, and I do hereby require all persons . . . ' etc. etc.

This remarkable document being signed :
' Frederick Stephenson, General Constable of the Tower.'

All this ceremony took place in the Constable's Office of the King's House, the residence of all the Tudor sovereigns, except Elizabeth—that lady having presumably had more than enough of the Tower when her sister Mary had her confined there in 1554.

General Milman, when all this ceremony was over, asked me to be seated, and then proceeded to inquire about my service in the Fifth Fusiliers, as he put it in ' these days '—which were actually *forty years after he had retired from the regiment !* And I had been rather inclined to regard myself as a bit of a

veteran ! Why, even old Sergeant Bradley of my recruit days was put in the shade by this bewhiskered old gentleman—as was ‘Sloper’ Burns by the language he used in describing service in the old days with the ‘Old and Bold’ ! It is probable that I conveyed to him some echo of his own sentiments in regard to the Old Regiment (as I now had to think of it), for at the end he expressed himself as ‘very proud to have made my acquaintance !’

He asked me also about my immediate prospects in civil life, whereupon I informed him that I had just obtained a very desirable position as Range Warden at Harton Moor, near Newcastle, and would gladly forgo the privilege of serving at the Tower if my services were not immediately required.

This seemed to please the old gentleman very much, and he explained to me that the fixed establishment of the Warders was forty, and that twenty-six were needed for daily duty, pay for that number being furnished by the Office of Works, who were responsible for the financial side of the business. Any in excess of that number meant partial unemployment, and as there were already three or four men in excess of that number, he did not want any increase just then. So that, if I had a civil employment and liked to go on with it, he would be pleased to allow me to do so, provided that I would agree to join at the Tower whenever sent for. I should, of course, in the meantime draw my retaining fee of £21 per annum and I should have to attend a half-yearly muster at the Tower on the first day of May and November, unless first obtaining leave of absence from him.

He also explained that many of the ‘divers privileges’ set forth in the warrant applied to Warders actually doing duty (in spite of which I was exempted from paying for my dog-licence on producing the warrant at South Shields !).

General Milman, in taking leave of me, shook my hand, and expressed his good wishes for my future as a servant of His Majesty (which made me feel, queerly, that I was starting life all over again, after my twenty-five years in the Army!) and his hopes that I might live many years to enjoy the honoured and privileged position that I had that day attained. All this was said with a sincerity and conviction the depth of which I have seldom heard reached, even in the pulpit.

I left the office tremendously impressed, and thereafter had a good look round, so as to get some impression of the conditions under which I seemed likely to spend the rest of my life.

I found that many alterations had taken place since my previous visit to the Tower in 1877, twenty-five years previously.

In those days visitors were marshalled into parties of about twenty-five inside the gates, and were then conducted round by a Warder, who would recount the history of the different spots as they were reached. But now I found that visitors paid for admission at the ticket-office, and thereafter went round by themselves, while Warders were posted at various points to see that they kept to the correct routes and interfered with nothing, etc.

The privilege of being conducted personally round the Tower was granted by the Governor only to distinguished individuals or parties.

I noticed also that there had been various alterations in the Tower itself. A number of places hitherto open to the public had been closed, and that old storehouses, etc., had been demolished or removed, and new ones built. In fact, the Tower seemed very different to when I had visited it before. But then, of course, the circumstances had also been very different!

I chatted with one or two of the Warders, and

thus came across an old friend—Q.M.S. Gibbs, late of the Durham Light Infantry. He had been with the 68th at Meerut when my company had marched in to relieve them, twenty years before! He had also served at the Depot at Newcastle, and so there was a double link between us.

We had quite a long chat, and he made me feel that General Milman had in no way exaggerated when he had pointed out to me the privilege of my new position, nor had my own ideas of the comforts of it been in any way exaggerated.

By the time we had been talking for a while, I commenced to feel that I was already a part of that grim, grey, old building, the scene of so much bloodshed and horror, and yet in some way such a peaceful spot in the centre of the hurly-burly of modern London.

It occurred to me then that the Tower had originally been built as a sanctuary, and that now, after many years, the circle was complete, and it had become once more a sanctuary, though one against conditions very different to those which had inspired its origin in the days of the Conqueror!

Eventually Gibbs insisted on taking me to his home in the Tower to meet his wife, and Mrs. Gibbs very hospitably insisted that I should stay the night with them, which I did, returning to Newcastle and the Depot the following day, completely free from any misgivings as to the future. Which was a comfort, for in those days I had to think of the future of six young bodies, since by now our family consisted of John, aged 14, Sandy, aged 12, Nell, aged 9, Elsie, aged 5, Bob, aged 3, and Don, aged 1.

However, I now felt that their future, as well as my wife's and my own, was now fairly well assured, so far as it lay in my power to make it so.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ORIGIN OF THE YEOMEN

AT this point I will digress for a short time to give a few details about the Yeomen, which do not seem to be generally known and which may prove of interest to the readers of my modest life-story.

To begin by dissipating what seems to be a very common error, we, who are affectionately nicknamed the 'Beefeaters' (though what is the origin of that nomenclature I have never been able to discover) are not, as most people seem to think, the Yeomen of the Guard—whose full and correct title, by the way, is 'The Yeomen of the King's Body Guard,'—though we are, in a sense, cousins, both springing from the same source as separate branches. We, the 'Yeomen Warders of the Tower of London' are, however, sworn as 'Yeomen Extraordinary of the King's Bodyguard.'

Although we do not claim any direct succession from William's 'Hus Carles'—his personal bodyguard—there can be little doubt but that he was actually the originator of our order.

Thus, when the first coronation of a king of all England took place—that of Duke William of Normandy, crowned William I of England, in 1066, the post of honour of guarding the entrance to the Abbey Church of St. Peter (now Westminster Abbey) was given to William's personal bodyguard. I shared in the same duty at the Coronation of King George V.

They were a picked body of stout, lusty fellows, well armed with pikes and swords, and feared nothing in the world but their master's wrath.

On this occasion their orders were clear—in brief, that they should allow no one to enter the Abbey during the coronation ceremony without proper authority, and that should any sort of rioting or trouble arise, they were to clear the crowd away at the point of the pike.

Posted where they were, by the entrance, these fellows could hear all that was going on inside the Abbey during the ceremony. They heard Lanfranc, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, demanding from the Norman nobles and knights assembled within, the oath of allegiance to the new King in their own familiar Norman tongue. Then came the turn of Saxon Walter, Archbishop of York, who had submitted to the Norman Conqueror, and so had retained his See, making the same demand, but this time of the Saxons and in their own language, which the bodyguard did not understand.

And the Saxon nobles, anxious, no doubt, to placate their new ruler, responded with such noise and vociferation that, since they didn't understand a word of what was being said, the bodyguard immediately decided that there was trouble, and so, in accordance with their orders, they levelled the points of their pikes at the crowd and set to work to drive them away from the Abbey. This being resented by the people, they showed resistance, and a right lusty fight ensued, the noise of which brought the knights and barons out from within the Abbey to assist in quelling the disturbance, and so left the new King and the clergy to complete the coronation ceremony almost alone in the Abbey !

Ever since then the proud position of mounting guard at the Abbey during coronation ceremonies

has been the privilege of the Yeomen Warders of the Tower.

I have said that we do not claim any direct connection with those lusty gallants who made such a furore at the Coronation of King William, but the fact remains that when that monarch built his castle and stronghold on the banks of the Thames at London, he first garrisoned it with his own body-guard.

Like all followers of a feudal nobleman, these men were at once servants and soldiers, the livery of their master, the Constable of the Tower, being also their uniform. And thereafter it follows that a succession of the guardians of the Tower must have been kept up in a similar way, since there was no standing army from which a garrison could be drawn. There exist no records of who they were, or what were their conditions of service, prior to the days of Edward III, but their place and their duties would seem to have been fixed for all time.

There is little detail available as to the history of the guardians of the Tower during the Middle Ages and onwards, but some idea of their development may be gathered from the various old records, diaries, and memoirs from time to time.

For instance, from an old record we learn that, in the days of Edward III, one John of London, 'a handy craftsman and an armourer,' was placed in charge of the gates, portcullises and drawbridges of the Tower, for which he received payment to the extent of four pence *per diem*, with an extra penny 'for a varbet to carry his keys after him, and also one penny a day during the time that he should be employed on scouring the harness in the Armoury within the Tower, and had the same clothes and a rugg gown and a halberd allowed him, as the rest of the Yeomen hath.'

It was the duty of this same John of London to

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superintend the opening and locking of the main gates at the appointed times and to 'shake the bars and search the locks at the shutting of the same,' and then 'in his own person' to bring up the keys with the rest of the Warders who had 'waited at the gates' and to deliver them to the Lieutenant 'and at night to receive the watchword from him and to deliver it to the Warders that are to watch.' Also each morning the 'said Porter' was to fetch the keys of the Tower gates, and 'to open them at due hours.'

From another old record we learn that Jno. Gervase, Porter of the Tower in the twenty-second year of the reign of Edward IV, was the first that had the words 'Chief Porter' inserted in his warrant.

' . . . Orders made by King Philip and Queen Mary, October, 12th, 1555, for the Government of this Tower :

' The Porter shall have of every person condemned his uppermost garment, or he agree with him for it.

' The Porter shall have of every person delivered out of the Tower Five Shillings.'

(Which sum, I have no doubt, was most ungrudgingly paid !)

' . . . Then about the year 1639 one William Bold had the place of Chief Porter. The Porter is always called in all books of records " Master Porter," and was in antient days always a Yeoman recommended by the Lieutenant, and was chosen of the antientest warders. . . . '

In 1661 Mr. Samuel Pepys records in his Diary :

' To the Tower on Ascension Day, and to the Church with the Governor, the Yeoman-Porter

carrying the keys before us, and the Warders following in their best array, and so to Church, and afterwards dined with the Lieutenant, Sir John Robinson.'

In connection with which gentleman, by the way, is said to have originated a familiar catchword. A condemned prisoner is said to have asked one of the Warders of this period if the business of beheading was a quick one, to which the Warder is said to have comfortingly replied: "Marry, sir, but of course. The axe goes up, and then it comes down—and your head's off before you can say 'Jack Robinson'!"

It was in the year 1687 that a Royal Decree was issued placing the Lieutenant, Chief Porter, and Yeomen Warders on the establishment of the Army, to be paid as the rest of His Majesty's garrisons were paid. In 1689 another Royal Decree increased the establishment of the Yeomen Warders from twenty-four to thirty.

' Court of Whitehall, 17th July, 1690.

' Present. The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty. Upon reading the petition of the Right Honourable Lord Lucas, Constable of the Tower of London, setting forth that Her Majesty's Royal predecessors did anciently establish forty Yeomen Warders in the Tower, that number being thought necessary to the Governor to make use of, for the guard of the gates and the security of the prisoners. That at present there are but thirty to undergo that charge. That the great number of prisoners now there, and the constant guard of the gates, do require a greater number of Warders, especially if more prisoners should be committed there. . . .'

The old Christmas Box which is still to be seen in the Warder's Hall at the Tower, shows that Sir

Isaac Newton, who was Master of the Mint in the Tower from 1699 to 1729, gave a Christmas Box of £1 yearly to the Warders. The following four noblemen, imprisoned in the Tower, also gave Christmas boxes to the Warders in 1715—the Earls of Nithsdale, Derwentwater, Powis, and Lansdowne, each a guinea.

The first of these noblemen, the Earl of Nithsdale, on the night before that appointed for his execution, contrived to make his escape from the Warders who had him in charge, the escape being effected in woman's clothes supplied him by his wife. The following five Warders 'were turned away for permitting or allowing his escape':

Jno. Cook—who had been a Warder 25 years.				
W. Mason	„	„	„	25 „
T. Baber	„	„	„	19 „
J. Bird	„	„	„	11 „
T. Davidge	„	„	„	10 „

It is in a record dated 11 October 1729 that we find first official mention of a new rank in the Tower personnel. It reads as follows :

'Mr Pennington, the *Gentleman* Porter, with 28 of the Yeomen Warders of the Tower, went by water to Whitehall and so on to St. James's Palace, to assist in the Coronation of His Majesty King George II. . . .'

An explanation of this, however, is found in an old register dealing mainly with other matters. This says, incidentally :

'Never a man of greater rank or quality than a Page of the Chamber or a Yeoman had the place of Chief Porter at the Tower until 1587, when one Sir William Georges (a decayed and poor knight) obtained this Yeoman's place, who,

after his blunt manner, gave the Queen thanks for it, telling her that being a gentleman, she had made him a Yeoman. To which the Queen answered: "By God's death she was sorry she had done his fellow knights so much wrong!" He was the first that had "Gentleman Porter" in his patent inserted and he had the wages of one shilling a day.'

It was a little prior to this incident that the Yeomen Warders were elevated to their present status, and became entitled to wear the Tudor uniform which was much the same as that worn to-day. This came about in the following manner:

The Duke of Somerset, uncle to King Edward VI, and sometime Protector of the Realm of England, was committed as a prisoner to the Tower. He was, it seems, considerably impressed by the 'Daily and diligent attendance of the Warders of the Tower, and, out of an honourable mind to encourage them, promised them that, when it should please God and the King to deliver him out of the Tower, he would procure them that favour from the King that they should wear his cloth, as the Yeomen of the Guard did.'

The Duke, when his release took place, remembered his promise, and 'caused the Warders of the Tower to be sworn extraordinary of the Guard, and to wear the same livery as they do, which had its beginning in this manner, and hath ever since been continued. . . .'

At one time the position of Yeoman Warder was considered such a privilege that Warderships were bought and sold, sometimes for quite considerable sums of money. It was usual in the case of such transactions for the Constable of the Tower to receive a portion of the purchase money, as a sort of commission on the deal! When a vacancy

occurred through death, the Constable used to sell the vacancy himself.

Thus, in 1735, we find the following record :

‘ The Constable signed and delivered a Warrant to Richard Laming, a Warder, recommended by Colonel Williamson, for £262 10 0, in the room of Thos. Curry, Yeoman Warder, deceased. . . .’

It was customary for prisoners at the Tower to be ‘ boarded ’ by the Warders in charge of them at their own expense, the outlay being refunded later by the Treasury.

Thus we have :

‘ The humble petition of Abraham Fowler, gentleman gaoler, of the Tower of London, to the Right Honourable the Lords of the Treasury. Sheweth that William, Earl of Kilmarnock, and Arthur, Lord Balmerino, have been subsisted by me, by the order of Lord Cornwallis, Constable of the Tower of London, for eleven weeks and four days, from the 29th day of May to the 18th day of August, 1746, at the rate of £4 a week, and paid in the following manner, *viz.* :

To subsistence of the two Lords .	£2	16	0
Lodgings per week	1	1	0
Dress their victuals and washing .	15	0	
4 Warders, each per week 10/- .	2	0	0
4 Warders’ diet, at 1/- per day each	1	8	0
Total expenses per week .	8	0	0
Amounting in all to	£93	8	0.

This appointment of ‘ Gentleman Gaoler ’ came into being during the reign of James I, as is shown by the following :

‘ L607. Gentleman—Gaoler.

‘ And whereas in former times there hath been a Gentleman Gaoler appointed by the Lieutenant

who hath special charge over the several warders over prisoners perform their duties, and the prisoners ordered and kept as they ought to be, His Majesty is pleased that there shall be a Gentleman Gaoler with an allowance of 12 pence a day.

‘ JAMES, R.’

Under the date of 10 April 1751 we find orders for 30 Yeoman Warders to attend at St. James’s Palace for the funeral of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

1758. 3 January. Orders for 30 Yeoman Warders to attend at the Palace of Westminster for the funeral of H.M. King George II.

1790. 28 September. 20 Warders to attend the funeral of H.R.H. the Duke of Cumberland.

1821. 19 July. Orders for the Yeoman Warders to attend the Coronation of King George IV.

As I have previously mentioned, in the old days it was customary to buy and sell the position of Yeoman Warder, the applicant, of course, having to be eligible for the position, and duly recommended, and accepted by the Lieutenant of the Tower.

But in 1826 the Duke of Wellington was appointed to be Constable of the Tower and he regarded this sort of thing as little more than what we should to-day describe as ‘ graft ’—which indeed it was.

Hitherto, when a Warder chose to retire, he could realize 250 guineas of the fees he had paid on appointment, from his successor. Or, if he died while still serving, this sum had to be paid by his successor to the Constable before he was permitted to take up his duties, or, indeed, his appointment was confirmed.

The Duke proceeded at once to make a clean sweep of these iniquities. He ordered that future vacancies in the body of Yeoman Warders should only be

available for old non-commissioned officers of the Army, of rank not lower than sergeant, and of meritorious service and properly recommended.

Thus passed the old order of the Yeomen Warders, and came into being the force as it is to-day.

CHAPTER XXV

THE YEOMEN OF TO-DAY

IT is to the Iron Duke that we Yeomen of to-day owe the very much improved conditions of service which we now enjoy. It was he who, in 1826, inaugurated the rules regarding eligibility for service, etc., which still held good when I joined the Yeomen eighty years later, and which are still in force to-day. I have given details of them in a previous chapter. He also reduced the fees payable to the far more reasonable sum of £32. The strength remained at forty.

It was twenty years before the Duke saw his reforms properly working, and his ideals fully realized, the last of the 'old hands' having passed to his final rest, and every member of the Yeoman Warders an ex-soldier of long service and non-commissioned rank.

Many fine fellows have come and gone since then. I have the roll before me as I write, and it shows the enrolment of 217 men in forty years—such names as 'Sergeant-Major Henry Sutcliffe, Scots Fusilier Guards, Sept. 1832,' or 'Q.M. Sergeant John Dorrington, 20th Foot, May, 1838.'

It would be out of place for me to attempt a description of the members of the body individually as they are to-day and it would also possibly prove a trifle boring to my readers, since the service histories, even if not the life-stories, of such men must necessarily be pretty similar. Let it suffice that they are all fine fellows, and necessarily, from

the rigid methods by which they have been selected, if not the salt of the earth, at least the salt of the British Army—which seems to me to be much the same thing!

Amongst us, we represent practically every branch of the British Army—Household Cavalry, Foot Guards, Cavalry of the Line, Royal Artillery; even the Royal Air Force is represented.

And that gives rise to a curious thought—I sometimes wonder what our old friend John of London, for instance, would have said if anyone had told him, as he locked the gates of the Tower at night, that one day in the future those same gates would be locked by a man whose business it had been to fly through the air like a bird! Or that sitting in one of the grey old rooms of the Tower in the future one might listen to music being made hundreds of miles away, in France, or even in the then undiscovered America?

I expect, as we old fogies are apt to do sometimes, he would have wagged his head and said: "Times are not what they used to be, and what is the world coming to, anyway?" Or words to that effect. . . . It certainly inspires one with something like awe when one gazes up at those grim, grey towers and keeps, and thinks of the changes they have seen—and survived.

But I digress.

As the general conditions of the Yeomen Warders have improved, so have their duties. No longer the grim business of guarding unfortunate prisoners, feeding and tending them during the last hours of their foreshortened lives. To-day we have the far more pleasant business of supervising the hundreds of visitors, directing and controlling the movements of the crowds that sometimes throng the old building, answering their questions and preventing them straying from the routes prescribed for them. Some

few of us, in turn, are available to conduct special parties who have applied for our services as guides to the Tower. Then there are, of course, such duties as guarding the gates, opening them in the morning and locking them at night, and so on.

Our hours of work, excepting for those on the roster for duty at the entrance gates (and there is always at least one Yeoman Warder on duty right through the twenty-four hours), are those during which the Tower is open to the public—from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the summer, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the winter. Once off duty we are our own masters, allowed to come and go as we please, without any restrictions whatever.

Our everyday uniform of blue is in cut very similar to the Tudor costume worn by the Yeomen of the Guard, but quite distinct in appearance. Our 'State Dress,' worn only on very special occasions, is, however, precisely similar to theirs, except for the baldrick, which they wear over the left shoulder.

These Yeomen of the Guard, of whom I have made previous mention, are not, as so many people imagine, quartered in the Tower. The mistake probably arises partly from Gilbert and Sullivan's inimitable comic opera, and partly from the similarity in name and uniform between us. Their headquarters are at St. James's Palace, and they have no duties at all in connection with the Tower. Their sole duties in these days are to attend the King on certain occasions of State.

Their strength is one hundred, and, like us, they are drawn from old warrant and non-commissioned ranks of the Army. In their case, however, a minimum height of 6 ft. is insisted upon, and until recently it was compulsory for them to wear beards, but in 1936 that regulation ceased to exist. There is also a body of 'Gentlemen of the King's Body Guard,' composed entirely of commissioned ranks.

There is little more that I can say about the Yeomen of the Tower in these times, except that, often as one hears the phrase 'just a happy family,' I do not believe that there is anywhere such an example of that most pleasant state of affairs as there is amongst the Yeomen of the Tower.

We are, in a sense, a little world unto ourselves.

We all, with our families, occupy charming, old-world houses, within the precincts of the Tower—such houses as make the mouths of history and tradition-loving Americans who visit the Tower water with envy, and such as many wealthy Englishmen would love to occupy.

At one time some of us were allowed our garden plots on the narrow side of the moat to the south. But we gave these up for the construction of the bowling green, and that fine old game, so reminiscent of Drake and the Armada, and of England at her best and greatest, provides us with evening recreation throughout the summer months. We have also, of course, our own mess for refreshments (part of it is situated in the 'old stone kitchen' made famous by Harrison Ainsworth in his book, *The Tower of London*), which is conducted under the same rules as the old sergeants' mess to which at one time we all of us belonged.

Strangely enough, when one thinks of all the times of strife and bloodshed it has gone through, I do not suppose that there is, in all England, a more peaceful and secluded spot than is afforded by the Tower after the visitors have left us. Nor can I think of any finer haven for the old soldier, who, his days of active service being inevitably over, can pass the remaining years of his life, still in the harness that has become so dear to him, and still in enjoyment of the company of fine old comrades of the kind he has been used to all his life; still

with the tramp of marching feet and the clank of accoutrements as old music in his ears ; and still with the notes of ' Reveille ' and the ' Last Post ' to mark the peaceful passing of his shadowing days.

Pax vobiscum, indeed ! . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

I BECOME AN INMATE OF THE TOWER

IN 1906 it was decided to reduce the number of civil police on duty at the Tower, and this meant that a greater number of Yeomen Warders would be needed there. And so it was that I received a peremptory summons to commence my service as a Warder as from 1 January 1907, together with another man who joined at about the same time as myself, John Withers, late Q.M.S. 11th Hussars (affectionately known as the 'Cherry Pickers').

I now found myself hovering over the gap between two stools, for I had settled down very comfortably to my work at Harton Moor Rifle Range, and found it very congenial, and the dwelling allotted to myself and family very comfortable. At the same time I was very reluctant to abandon the prospect of a settled and presumably comfortable future such as was offered by service at the Tower.

I took my predicament to Captain Reed, of the D.L.I., commandant at the Range, and asked his advice. Eventually he allowed me to close the Range for the winter months, until the 31 March, which time would be ample for me to discover what service at the Tower was really like, and to balance its chances and amenities against those offered by work at the Range. In granting me this concession, Captain Reed was kind enough to express his sincere hope that I should not find life in the Tower all that I expected it to be and that our happy associations on the Range would in due course be renewed.

What actually eventuated was something which neither of us had contemplated, for in that year, Mr. Haldane's reorganization of the Volunteers resulted in the birth of the Territorial Army, under the new rules and regulations of which the Harton Moor Rifle Range became redundant, and faded out of being.

When I first reported at the Tower for service as a Yeoman Warder there was no available accommodation for myself and family within the precincts, so we went to reside in the suburbs, and so found ourselves living in a street for the first time in all our married life of twenty years' duration. Not an entirely pleasant experience.

Our new home was in Leyton, and nearly an hour each way was taken by my journeying to and from the Tower, but this and other minor inconveniences were largely balanced by the excellent educational facilities which the children enjoyed.

At this time John, the eldest, was nineteen, and was working as a clerk while, at the same time, he was studying for admission to St. John's, Highbury, with a view to entering the Church, which he finally did in 1911. Sandy (seventeen) had been apprenticed at Jarrow as a marine engineer, but rather than leave him behind us, and so that he should not be separated from the influence of his mother, we brought him with us and gave him another year at the local secondary school. He eventually joined the South African Police, with whom he served with distinction for twenty-three years, finally leaving to take up a post as Assistant Supervisor of the Globe and Phoenix Gold Mine at Que Que, Southern Rhodesia. The eldest girl, Catherine, then fourteen, went to the girls' secondary school, where she matriculated in 1910, and gained a scholarship to the London University, from which she graduated as a B.A. Not such a bad record for the family of a mere soldier, I think!

The Tower claimed all my days. In fine weather I would walk or cycle from Leyton—a distance of about five and a half miles, some half of it across Hackney Marsh and Victoria Park. Almost like being in the country—but not quite! In wet weather I could get a train to Fenchurch Street.

I had to get to the Tower each morning (except Sundays) in time to change into my uniform and be ready for duty by ten o'clock. This struck me as being more like an actor's procedure than that of a soldier or Warder, but obviously the sight of an old gentleman riding a bicycle along the London streets wearing the ancient Tudor dress of the Yeomen Warders would have created too much of a sensation, so it just had to be done.

Duty in the Tower, with some very small alterations, is just the same to-day as it was then.

Our posts for the day are allotted by the Chief Warder, and duly posted in the 'Wait Book.' We are scattered all over the Tower and various 'strategic points.' For instance, in the White Tower there are two Warders posted on each floor, to supervise the visitors and to see that they do not interfere with the weapons and armour displayed there. In the Jewel House there are three Warders on duty, for obvious reasons. Then there are the Gates to guard, and one of us is on duty at the Byward Gate, another at the Outer Entrance-Gate, and so on, all of us equipped with very definite and specific orders in case of certain emergencies, such as fire, rioting, accident, etc. The first two, of course, never happen, and the last, thank goodness, only very rarely.

In addition to the duties incident upon the care and superintendence of visitors, a Warder remains on duty at the Byward Gate at all hours of the day and night, his chief duty being to see that only residents of the Tower and their friends enter and

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In addition to the duties incident upon the care and superintendence of visitors, a Warder remains on duty at the Byward Gate at all hours of the day and night, his chief duty being to see that only residents of the Tower and their friends enter and

leave during the non-public hours. In the case of friends and private visitors, the Warder for whom they ask is held responsible for their good conduct while within the precincts of the Tower.

This does not amount to any real restriction. Our friends and visitors come and go much as though they were living in a street. But this only holds good up till midnight. After that the Gates are finally locked, and only residents who are in possession of a special pass are allowed to enter, while no one, on any consideration, is allowed to leave.

When I first joined, members of the garrison of all ranks coming to the Gates after midnight were refused admission, but in 1937 the time for admission was extended by one hour, until 1 a.m.

When the Great War broke out, in 1914, the 2nd Scots Guards were in garrison at the Tower. The 1st battalion had gone overseas, and the 2nd battalion received all the reservists, so that we had some 630 odd men (some of them very odd) there at the time.

New regulations came into force in regard to the Gates, and the Byward was locked at 11 p.m., the Warder in charge having instructions to open it only at stated intervals thereafter. This meant that there was often a group of ten or fifteen men, mostly soldiers of the garrison on pass, waiting to come in at a time, and mighty impatient at the delay.

One night in September I was on duty at the Gate, and, in due course, opened the wicket to let an unusually big crowd through. They were all fairly well 'lit up' and inclined to be jovially noisy.

The first man to squeeze through the wicket was a shortish piper of the Scots Guards, kilt, plaid, and all. As he came through, with the others crowding after him, he gave me an impish grin, and then raised one hand in mock salute, crying loudly :

"Hail! Mighty eater-of-beef!"

We were, naturally, used to being 'chipped' by the soldiers, and they were equally used to us getting on our dignity in return. I saw at once that the piper and his comrades were expecting to hear me come out with the usual, 'What the h——I did he mean by speaking to a Warder on duty like that? Didn't he know my rank was equal to that of his own sergeant-major, and how would he like it if I had him clapped in the Spur guard-room to cool his heels and remember his manners . . . etc. etc.'

I saw the semi-circle of grinning faces waiting for the expected outburst on these lines, and I disappointed them by solemnly raising both hands, in the correct Roman salute, and responding, in my deepest voice :

"Hail! Mighty drinker-of-beer!"

There was a moment's astounded silence, followed by a roar of laughter at the expense of the little piper, whose face was a study! Then his comrades grabbed him, pushing him along, thumping him on the back, and telling him between their laughs that 'the auld b—— had properly had him that time!'

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TOWER IN WAR-TIME

THE outbreak of war in 1914 seemed, in some strange way, to increase the atmosphere of grimness which always surrounds the old Tower, and before it was all over there was some justification for this, as I will show !

In the beginning, however, it made little difference to the normal round of our daily duty as Warders. Four of our number, Brigade Sergeant-Major T. Knight, R.A., and three others were allowed to rejoin the Army without being struck off the Roll of Warders. Sergeant-Major Knight went through the Palestine Campaign under Sir E. Allenby, and rejoined the Warders after the War was over. Warder Malcolm Maughan, Sergeant-Major, Highland Light Infantry, rejoined his old regiment and was killed on the Somme in '16. The other two resigned. I did not apply, feeling that at the age of fifty-five my usefulness as a soldier was over.

The old Tower resumed its ancient functions as a State prison during the War, and on several occasions past scenes were revived, in a modernized setting, when certain prisoners of State paid the last penalty there.

No longer the black-draped block and the grim, black-uniformed figure of the executioner with his gleaming axe ! Now it was the more efficient and hardly less grim firing-party who did the fatal work.

The last prisoners to be shot in the Tower (on

Tower Green, actually), were three ringleaders of a mutiny which took place in the Black Watch in 1736. These were gallant gentlemen who died because they dared to protest against a gross breach of faith which was, in itself, a disgrace to the administration of discipline and justice in the Army of those days.

But now we had miscreants of a very different kidney. Spies! Agents of our enemies! When the War first broke out England was riddled with spies, and the Government's counter-spy system was very active, and soon resulted in the arrest and trial of a number of suspects.

The trials were always, of necessity, conducted under conditions of profound secrecy. The general public knew nothing about them, and neither did we, in the Tower, until the convicted spy was sent there for execution.

The condemned individual was sent to the Tower from Brixton Prison, on the night before the date fixed for the execution. He was confined in a cell under the charge of the Main Guard for the night.

Early in the morning a grim squad of men would set out from Wellington Barracks—the firing-party, drawn from the ranks of the Guards quartered there, and eight in number.

Then, at an hour when hardly anyone was stirring, the prisoner was fetched from his cell and marched to the shed in the outer ward which was sometimes used as a rifle-range. And there, with no tolling of bells, black flags, or any form of publicity whatever, the poor wretch would meet his shameful end.

Of these men one, at least, deserves special mention.

Carl Lody had served four years as an under-officer in the German Navy under their system of conscription. When his naval service was completed he joined a tourist agency and travelled extensively

under their ægis, and thus learned to speak several languages, including English, like a native.

When the War broke out he was in England, and, had he disclosed his identity, would have been interned like many of his countrymen were in similar circumstances.

But he was already in possession of information likely to be of use to his Government, and, fired by a natural patriotic fervour, he determined to take a chance and endeavour to obtain some more.

He succeeded in this, and duly sent his information to Germany, via Holland. But one of his messages was intercepted, and, as a result, the counter-spy system turned its attention to him. And in due course Lody was arrested.

The usual secret trial followed, with the usual result, and one wet, drizzling November night, the living body of Carl Lody was delivered by police-van to the Tower, there to spend his last few hours before he paid the final price for his patriotism.

The following morning broke cold, foggy, and bleak, and at a very early hour Lody was brought from his cell, and the grim procession formed up on the veranda of the Tower Main Guard.

It was led by the Chaplain, solemnly reading the Burial Service, followed by the prisoner, with an armed escort marching on either side of him, and the firing-party of eight stalwart guardsmen bringing up the rear.

Nobody liked this sort of thing. It was altogether too cold-blooded for any ordinary stomach (particularly that of a soldier, who hates cold-bloodedness) to face with equanimity, and it is not too much to say that, of that sad little procession, the calmest and most composed member was the condemned man himself.

For the Chaplain, in particular, it was a bad time. He had never had a similar experience, and his

voice had a shake in it as he intoned the solemn words of the Burial Service over the living form of the man it most concerned. His hand, too, as he held the book, trembled a little. The more honour to him!

The escort and the firing-party, too, were far from comfortable, and one could see that the slow march suitable to the occasion was getting badly on their nerves. They wanted to hurry over it, and get the beastly business finished.

But the prisoner walked steadily, stiffly upright, and yet as easily and unconcernedly as though he was going to a tea-party, instead of to his death. His eyes were upturned to the gloomy skies, and his nostrils eagerly drank in the precious air that was so soon to be denied them. But his face was quite calm and composed—almost expressionless.

Then came a queer and pathetic little incident. As they came to the end of the veranda, the Chaplain, in his nervousness, made to turn left, which was the wrong way. Instantly Lody took a quick step forward, caught the Chaplain by the right arm, and, with a polite and kindly smile, gently guided him to the right—the correct way.

A few moments later the procession disappeared through the doorway of the sinister shed, and shortly after that came the muffled sound of a single volley.

Carl Lody had paid.

And he paid cheerfully and unresentfully—dying as he had lived, like a good man and a hero. For, spy though he may have been, he was also that.

Under the direction of the Provost-Marshal of the London District, head of that very efficient police system peculiar to the Army, known as the Military Foot Police, thirteen such executions took place in the Tower during the War. And of these thirteen enemy spies who thus met their end, only the first

four were natives of the country for which they died. The rest were aliens of various nationalities, and all of them actuated simply by greed.

But with Lody it was a very different matter. He did not risk his life merely to get money. He gave his life for his Fatherland, in the truest and most self-sacrificing spirit. That is why I say that he died, not shamefully as a mere mercenary, but as a patriot and a hero!

When I think of Carl Lody a phrase always slips into my head—just three little words: ‘A gentleman, unafraid!’

I am not the only person who remembers Carl Lody. Even after the twenty years that have elapsed since he faced the firing-party so gallantly, he still lives, as he well deserves to, in the memories of some of his countrymen, and even to-day it is no unusual experience for a Yeoman Warder in the Tower to be accosted by a burly, brachicephalic German with the request to ‘see vere vos Carl Lody shot?’

It is also no unusual thing for one or other of us to be asked where Roger Casement was shot. And this reveals a curious and persistent, as well as a wide-spread, error on the part of the general public. Roger Casement was not executed in the Tower, and furthermore, he was not shot. He was hanged in Brixton Prison.

It is, I suppose, very many years since the dignified tranquillity of the Tower was so much disturbed as it was on the morning of Saturday, 17 July 1917, when we received the air-raid alarm at about eleven o'clock in the morning. At first we took no more notice of the warning than usual, but presently we were able to see the enemy air-planes, looking, against the background of the sky, like flies on a ceiling, at a height we afterwards learned to be about twenty thousand feet.

To we old-time soldiers, this aerial fighting was a new institution, and, after the manner of our kind, we were inclined to be more than a little contemptuous of it. It was somewhat in this spirit that we watched the tiny machines flying above our heads, until presently our contempt changed to something like anxiety as first one and then another and another reverberating crash sounded around us, and we realized that they were dropping bombs very close indeed to our sacred and beloved edifice!

And then there dawned upon us what I still believe to be a fact—that the Tower was one of the objectives of that daring raid!

I am not going to pretend that we felt comfortable about it. We were soldiers—trained men of action—and to such the helpless inaction engendered by an air-raid on the raided is even more trying than it is to the civilian.

Three bombs fell into the river. Then, with a thunderous roar that even shook the massive age-old stones of the ancient fortress itself, one fell on Tower Hill, exploding in the middle of the roadway and killing three people and a horse. Then another fell in the moat, penetrating the earth to a depth of four feet, but luckily without bursting. Something came crashing through a skylight in the roof of the White Tower, and buried itself in the floor. When we got it out we found that it was the nose-cap of a shell, which had probably been fired by the anti-aircraft gun on Tower Bridge.

Presently, chased by our own aircraft, the enemy planes flew away, much to our relief—and so ended the latest attack on London's most ancient fortress.

To close these reminiscences of the Tower during the Great War on a more pleasant note, here is one incident that sticks in my memory.

Major-General Sir Arthur Wynne, K.C.M.G., was at that time Keeper of the Jewel House, and

had his residence in St. Thomas's Tower, above the Traitor's Gate. He and Lady Wynne were both very friendly and deservedly popular with us all. Therefore there was great grief amongst the Yeomen Warders when we learned that their only son, a Lieutenant in the Yorkshire Light Infantry, was reported 'missing, believed killed' together with a number of other officers in the same regiment. The old couple mourned the loss of their only son sorely, but with great bravery and dignity. All our hearts were very sad for their sake, and there was gloom amongst us that was slow in passing.

And then, some four months after the report, there came extraordinary and gladsome news. A cheque had found its way to Messrs Cox and Co., payable to the German Red Cross Funds, and signed by Lieutenant Wynne and all his missing comrades !

It was easy to deduce just what had happened. Taken prisoners in an action near Le Cateau, the Lieutenant and his comrades were not allowed to communicate with their friends, and the capture was kept a dead secret by the Germans. Realizing the anxiety that would be felt on their behalf by their relatives at home, the officers had hit on the ingenious wheeze of making a contribution to the German Red Cross by cheque, knowing that eventually the cheque would drift through to Cox's, and so the survival of all who had signed it would be understood.

This ingenious message was received about Christmas-time—a splendid gift indeed for Sir Arthur and Lady Wynne, as well as to other mourners and a promoter of great joy amongst us Warders of the Tower !

CHAPTER XXVIII

VISITORS TO THE TOWER

MANY circumstances combine to make the Tower of London one of the great sights of the City. In a sense it may be said to have been the nucleus around which the ancient city, as we know it, first took form and shape. The historic events which have happened there are familiar to even the most cursory students of English history. Furthermore, appealing alike to expert and layman, the collection of arms and armour displayed in the White Tower is, I think, unrivalled anywhere in the World both for quantity and variety, while the Jewel House is also unique, in that it is the only public exhibition of its kind in existence anywhere—and this apart altogether from the beauty and historical interest belonging to it.

But, human nature being what it is, it is probable that the greatest attraction for the crowds who visit the Tower yearly is that attached to the scenes of torture, suffering, and blood-spilling that are always associated with the grand old building.

While everybody knows that the Tower is one of the principal sights of London that should be seen by all visitors, few, I think, know for how long the Tower has been a show-place as well as a prison and a fortress.

The first record of mere sight-seeing visitors to the Tower, as a matter of fact, dates back to the reign of James I, when that monarch brought distinguished foreign visitors and friends to the

Tower to see the lions, and also staged bear-baitings and similar spectacles for their further amusement. Ever since that date there has been an increasing flow of visitors, either invited or paying, to see the sights of the Tower.

The lions and other beasts of the Royal Menagerie remained in the Tower until 1832, when they were transferred to the newly organized Zoo in Regent's Park. Some years later a practical joker sent out five hundred ornately printed cards, inviting the recipients to visit the Tower on 1 April 1851, to view the 'Washing of the Lions' at the Tower Gate. The persons invited ranged from people of title to wealthy City merchants, and they turned up in their hundreds, all the approaches to the Tower being blocked by their equipages, and confusion reigning supreme for some hours! There was, of course, no washing of the lions, because, for one reason, there were no lions to wash!

About the same time as the Royal Menagerie was moved from it, the Tower ceased, for the first time since its construction, to be a State prison. Why there should have come about such a cessation of treason and rebellion as to make such an institution no longer necessary, it is for students of history to determine and explain. One result of the change is demonstrated by the almost total lack of restraint on the comings and goings of those who wish to see the sights of the Tower during the appointed hours.

When, in the 1840's and '50's, the development of the railways increased travel facilities, and made long journeys comparatively cheap, the Capital became one of the Meccas of sight-seeking provincials, and the Tower entered into its present-day era of popularity as one of the greatest sights of London, although, as far back as the days of William and Mary, the Great Armoury was opened by them

in 1691, and was thereafter available to the public on payment of 2s. 6d. per head.

To-day, although necessarily confined to certain limits, the public can freely wander around most parts of the Tower that can be of real interest to them, excepting, of course, the barracks, offices, private houses, etc. . . . They can obtain a sufficiently comprehensive guide-book for 2d., and are at liberty to ask the Warders who are stationed at intervals along their route any questions they like regarding any historical or other point that may puzzle them.

Sometimes these questions are very amusing. A very frequent one concerns the murder of the young Princes in 1483. A great many people come to see the Tower, who visited, in bygone years, the 'Chamber of Horrors' at the original Madame Tussaud's (since destroyed by fire). There they had seen a most realistic reconstruction of the scene of the murder, elaborately (if perhaps not quite correctly) set out. To-day many of them come, with memories dimmed and confused by the intervening years, and insist that they saw that scene in the Bloody Tower, and want to know what has happened to it. It is very difficult to persuade many of them that the grim scene was never laid out in the Tower—except, of course, on the occasion when it actually happened.

Sometimes it is a little discouraging to serious students and lovers of history, like myself, to find how people concentrate on the horrors and bloodshed of the Tower, to the exclusion of all else. They demand to see the torture chambers and the rack, or at least where it stood, and are usually bitterly disappointed at being shown a two-foot model, with a diminutive wax figure—representing the unfortunate Anne Askew, 1521—stretched upon it.

The real truth is that the amount of torture

inflicted in the Tower has been very small, considering its history, and all the instruments of torture now in existence are hung in one glass case in the crypt, and can be taken in at a glance. But it is very hard to make visitors believe this.

In the basement of the Keep there is a Norman well, and visitors always hope to hear from the Warder some gruesome stories of witches who have been drowned therein. I have a very old stock joke I sometimes work on these folk :

" Ah ! " I say, in response to the usual questions. " But have you heard the story of the two wells ? "

Spoken in a low tone, and with an air of mystery and secrecy.

" No," they answer, in similar tones.

Whereat I shake my head and murmur in deep, solemn tones :

" Well . . . ! Well . . . ! "

And then I turn sadly away. ' This piece of foolery usually has the effect of raising a laugh, even if it does not go far towards satisfying their morbid curiosity.

The number of visitors varies, with the season, of course, and ranges from three hundred to four hundred per day in the winter, increasing to as many thousands between July and September. On Bank Holidays that number used to be easily doubled, and as many as thirteen thousand have been through the Tower on an August Bank Holiday.

That number is never reached nowadays, the main reason being that in those days all the show places were free, and people could be hurried on with constant objurgations of ' Move on, there, please ! ' and ' Pass around, please ! ' far more peremptorily than now, when they pay for admission to the Jewel House—where the greatest lingering takes place—at least.

All races, creeds, and colours are to be found

amongst our visitors, though mostly distinguished only by their faces and language, for they nearly all wear European dress, with the exception of the women of the Eastern countries, such as India, Burmah, China, Malaya, or Japan. A well-dressed Parsee woman, in her gold-embroidered *sari*, is one of the most graceful and beautiful sights of its kind to be seen anywhere. The men of these countries rarely wear native dress, but blend the *pagri* (turban) with Western jacket and trousers. Women visitors of all European countries, and of America, have the one style of costume, differing only as to material and colouring.

It is not always easy to grow accustomed to strange ladies asking me how I got all that breastful of medals, frequently fingering them while they ask, and curiously turning them over to see what is on the reverse side. Or, as they frequently do, why I am called a 'Beefeater,' and how the nickname originated.

I cannot answer the last question, because I do not know myself, and I doubt if anyone else does, either. There are various legends extant, and perhaps the best one concerns an early escapade of that bright young king, Henry VIII, who as a young man is said to have gone hunting in Waltham Forest, in the disguise of one of his own Yeomen of the Guard. Overtaken by nightfall, he sought shelter in Waltham Abbey, and, as was customary, was given a good meal of beef and bread.

During the meal the Abbot came round the refectory and gave his blessing to the guests. Thereafter his attention was attracted to the young 'Yeoman' who was doing great justice to his food. The Abbot remarked that 'he would give a hundred marks to be such a good beef eater!'

Whereat the young man looked up, his eyes twinkling, and answered:

"Good, my Lord Abbot! Some day I may remind you of those words!"

Not very long after this incident the Abbot was committed to the Tower on an indefinite charge, and kept for some weeks on very simple fare, and not excessive in quantity at that.

Then he was informed that the charges against him had been disproved, and that he was a free man once more, but before he left the Tower the Constable craved that he would join him in a meal that might help to make up for the privations he had suffered while a prisoner. This the Lord Abbot was very willing to do.

Seated before a well-filled platter of beef and bread, the Abbot found that he had fully regained his youthful appetite, and while in the process of enthusiastically demonstrating this interesting fact, he was interrupted by a heavy hand on his shoulder, and a voice which said:

"And now, my Lord Abbot, I'll trouble you for that hundred marks! For I see that you, too, have become a most excellent beef eater!"

And so the King had his little joke, the Abbot paid his hundred marks, and the story getting abroad caused the nickname of 'Beefeaters' to be conferred upon the Yeomen of the Guard. Or such is the legend, though I doubt its authenticity.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that while some people may be in doubt as to the difference between a Yeoman of the Guard and a Yeoman Warder of the Tower, almost all the world knows what a 'Beefeater' is, and what he looks like.

I have heard, however, of at least one young lady who, apparently, did not. Last summer a certain well-known artist brought a lady visitor to the Tower. She was an American—a film actress. Her host thought the Tower would greatly interest her, as, no doubt, it did. But when they arrived at the

gates, and the artist was trying to impress her with the grandeur of the building from that view-point, he suddenly found that she was paying no attention to him whatever, but was staring, goggle-eyed, at the Yeoman on duty at the gates.

"Wal," she cried at last. "If this isn't jest too good to be true! There's the one thing in l'il old London I most wanted to see—a reel Pearly King. . .!"

When, as frequently happens, some distinguished visitors—such as foreign statesmen, or soldiers of note, or members of Royal families—propose to pay us a visit the Governor is usually informed first, so that they may be given the attention proper to their rank and station. One of our number is then specially told off to attend the high-and-mighty, and to act as guide and cicerone during the progress round the Tower.

In 1917 the Princess Mary, now the Princess Royal, brought her two cousins, daughters of the Queen of Roumania, to see the Tower, accompanied by a train of attendant ladies and gentlemen. The Constable also made one of the party, the duty of conducting which was allotted to me. For one and a half hours I did my duty nobly, and I do not think they found me lacking either in knowledge of the grand old building, or in words wherein to convey that knowledge.

Finally, they left by the Middle Gate, where their fleet of magnificent cars, and the rest of their retinue, awaited them. My pleasant duty being now finished, I stopped and stood aside at the archway, leaving the Royal ladies to the farewells and felicitations of the Governor and the other big-wigs. But etiquette insisted that I must remain standing there until the visitors had actually departed. After the usual bowings and compliments, our Princess stood for a moment, still chatting to the Governor, General

Pipon, while the others took their seats in one of the cars, and then seemed to be glancing round as though in search of someone.

And then, much to my surprise, H.R.H. came running back alone to where I was standing, and holding out her hand (which I could only take), smilingly said that her cousins wished to thank me for the very kind way I had looked after them, and to express their appreciation of the interest I had given to the Tour, and would I also accept her own thanks, as she had enjoyed it very much! She then insisted on shaking hands again, and ran back to her cousins and the waiting cavalcade, without giving me the opportunity to make any reply—which probably saved me from committing some *gaucherie* or other.

Nothing could possibly have been more spontaneously charming. Her Royal dignity would have been more fittingly served by ordering my attendance to receive her thanks, but she charmingly ignored all that and allowed her natural kindness to find expression.

As a contrast I remember another occasion, when I performed a similar service for a foreign queen and her little girls. She also expressed her thanks, but formally and through the Governor. As to moving a step in my direction, or offering me her hand—well, I am sure she never so much as thought of it!

As a 'Beefeater,' and therefore one of the sights of the Tower, I am, of course, quite used to being stared at. But on one occasion I noticed a little middle-aged lady examining me with unusual interest and curiosity. She also seemed a trifle agitated.

And when she heard my voice, I saw that her agitation increased.

At last, seeming to find her voice with some difficulty, she told me that I had given her a shock,

because I was so much like her father, who had died the previous year. Even the tones of my voice, she said, were exactly like his.

"Well, Madam," I said, "it is not impossible that there is some relationship. Might I ask the name of your father?"

And then it was my turn to get a shock!

"He was Sir Andrew Fraser," she told me, "Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal!"

Two gentlemen who were with her, and who had known the late Sir Andrew, confirmed her impression of the resemblance, and I was requested to give my family history. This I did, but we could not establish any definite connection, although we discovered that, strangely enough, Sir Andrew and I were exactly the same age, and that he had actually been in Agra in '81 and '82, when I was soldiering there.

CHAPTER XXIX

YEOMAN GAOLER

AFTER living for seventeen years in Leyton, accommodation was at last available for myself and my family within the precincts of the Tower—at No. 4, Tower Green.

There were now left only three of our original family of seven children, though the only one actually lost to us was poor Elsie, who died in December 1918, of poliomyelitis (often called 'Infantile Paralysis'), which is inflammation of the grey matter of the spinal cord. Our poor daughter lingered for three years, hopelessly paralysed in the lower limbs. All that we could do for her we did, but from the very beginning there was little hope, and in the end she left us, very sad and desolate.

Donald married a Miss Gwenyth Morgan, a charming girl of his own age, in 1931, and a curious and interesting feature of their marriage was that at the ceremony the most prominent and important positions (excepting, of course, that of the bride!) were filled by three brothers—my sons. The Reverend John conducted the service in his official capacity; George (otherwise known as 'Bob') played the organ; and Donald, of course, was the bridegroom. I wonder if this is anything of a record?

History has a queer way of repeating itself. On the 1 March 1933, the Yeoman Gaoler, Mr. Chas. E. Gurney, another typical old sergeant-major, late of the Notts and Derby Regiment, was forced by

persistent ill-health to resign his position. As had happened at Mian Mir, forty-seven years previously, I was the senior of my rank, and was promoted to the position.

I moved my household goods into No. 5, Tower Green, which has always been the house of what used to be the 'Gentleman Gaoler,' which high-sounding title was reverted to 'Yeoman Gaoler' in the reorganization of the Warders ordered by the Duke of Wellington.

It is commonly supposed that this house held for a time the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey, but the fact is that the house was rebuilt about 1680, and it was not from the window of the actual house that I at present occupy, but of the one that previously stood upon its site, that the poor lady saw her husband being led out to execution. Nevertheless, my house has certainly 'entertained' a number of distinguished prisoners, including the Lords Balmerino and Kilmarnock, after the '45.

Actually my duties as Yeoman Gaoler, other than that I act as a sort of assistant to the Chief Warder and share the ordinary routine, are more or less obsolete. On 'State Occasions' I am equipped with an enormous long-handled axe, the same as that borne by my predecessor, the 'Gentleman Gaoler,' when he conducted State prisoners to the trial and which, on the return journey, he carried with the edge towards them, if convicted, or away from them if acquitted. But it was never, as some people imagine, used for executions.

Another, and especially important duty of mine is, at certain times, the care of the Crown Jewels—but of that more anon.

Actually I have had nothing to do with the few very exceptional prisoners who have been lodged in the Tower since I have been there. But some years ago there was a deal of unpleasant publicity focussed

on the Tower, which, in an oblique manner, affected me.

This is what was designated by the Press as 'The Officer in the Tower' case. A certain Lieutenant Baillie Stewart was alleged to have committed a breach of the Official Secrets Act, and for this he was placed under arrest. He was then, to use the official Service phrase, 'put back' to await a court martial.

As this was to be held in London, he was sent to the Tower and attached to the Welsh Guards, then in garrison there, for the period of waiting.

In accordance with the usual custom, and with King's Regulations, this officer was assigned quarters compatible with his rank, and with a soldier-servant to wait on him, during his incarceration in the Tower, much as though he had been at complete liberty.

But, as a court martial prisoner, an armed sentry was posted outside his quarters day and night, with certain definite orders, which included that, from time to time he should enter the officer's rooms, to ascertain . . . etc. etc., and also that he was to allow no person to have speech with him, and so on.

Some of his friends got hold of a version of the conditions of his imprisonment, and wrote indignant letters to the papers about it, with the result that the pestilentially persistent Press photographers, who swarm everywhere in their search for sensational items, found opportunities to 'snap' him as he walked about the Tower grounds, under the escort of another officer, taking advantage of the regulation two hours per day exercise which such prisoners are allowed.

One result of all this nonsense was that my numerous friends and relatives outside the Tower, even to cousins in Australia, wrote letters reproving me for, in my official capacity as 'Yeoman Gaoler,'

meting out such harsh treatment to this poor young man! Actually, thank goodness, I had nothing whatever to do with him.

There is a common error regarding the fate of Mary Queen of Scots—particularly amongst French people, who are continually coming to me to ask, 'Vere Maria Stoovart was put to death.' When I tell them that she was not executed at the Tower at all, but at Fotheringay Castle, they stubbornly refuse to believe me, and stoutly assert that their history books tell them she was beheaded in the Tower. When I tell them that their history books are all wrong, they look at me with suspicion, and regard it as another of the wicked wiles of 'perfidious Albion.'

Were it not for the fact that I regard the tragic fate of that most unfortunate lady as no subject for any kind of levity, I might be tempted to answer them very differently.

CHAPTER XXX

CROWN JEWELS AND CORONATIONS

IN the previous chapter I mentioned a very special and important duty of the Yeoman Gaoler. It is that, on certain occasions, he is required to take charge of, and to be responsible for the safety of, the Crown Jewels.

Normally this unique and invaluable collection is kept and exhibited in the Jewel Room, which is situated in the Wakefield Tower. They are well guarded always, although there is only one attempt to steal them on record—that of Colonel Blood, who, in 1671, bludgeoned Mr. Talbot Edwards, the then Keeper of the Jewels in the Martin Tower, and made off with the Crown Jewels under his cloak.

At all times the Jewels are considered of great importance, both financially and, more particularly, nationally, and they are always one of the most popular sights with the visitors, who have what pretty well amounts to a stock series of questions to ask about them, the principal ones being :

(a) : ' Are these the real objects they are stated to be ? '

(b) : ' What is the value of them ? '

(c) : ' How many of you stand here all night ? '

To which we, on our part, have our stock answers ; as under :

(a) : ' They are perfectly genuine. '

(b) : ' The value is incalculable. It would be impossible to put it into figures. '

(c) : 'Nobody stays here all night. The place is left empty !'

A great many visitors have the curious but fixed impression that the whole railed-in show-case is lowered into a gigantic tank of water every night for safety.

But the real national importance of the Jewels is only demonstrated on the rare occasions when they have to be put to practical use.

In 1649 the Commonwealth Government of England consigned to the melting-pot all the symbols and insignia of kingship, but when the Restoration came most of them were re-made, including an exact replica of the Crown worn by Edward the Confessor in 1042.

Since then other additions have been made. A new crown was designed for Queen Victoria to wear and this is still used by her successors, with the addition of the great 'Koh-i-noor' diamond. The Crown of India was made for the crowning of King George V at Delhi in 1911. New crowns were also made for Queen Mary in 1911, and for the present Queen in 1937. Then there are three sceptres, an orb, spurs, rings, bracelets, an ampulla used for the anointing oil, the King's State sword, and other swords and maces carried by State officials in the Coronation procession.

I attended my first coronation as a Yeoman Warder when King George V was crowned—but then, of course, only as one of the rank-and-file. Even that, however, was something of an experience.

I was one of the guards at the entrance of the Abbey, and we were placed in two lines, facing inwards, and at arm's length apart. And between us as we stood there, there passed, not only all the great nobles and notabilities of our own country, but the potentates of every foreign country on the face of the earth. I suppose it is not every man who

can say that he has stood while the kings, queens, and rulers of all the world have passed before him?

Somebody learned, from that occasion, to avoid little slips that might lead to confusion. At the Coronation of George V there were no rehearsals, but at that of our present King every item, even to the part played by His Majesty himself, was rehearsed down to the smallest detail.

But by the time this happened I had been promoted to Yeoman Gaoler, and so my part in the great ceremony was concerned only with the Jewels.

Nominally these were supposed to be removed from the Tower to St. Peter's on the day preceding the Coronation, but actually, on this occasion, many of them had been in the hands of the Court Jewellers for examination, cleaning, etc.

As Yeoman Gaoler, I was given an escort of six Warders, and sent off to the Abbey to receive all these treasures from the Court Jewellers on the day preceding the Coronation.

In the 'Jerusalem Chamber,' a spacious and ornate apartment used by the Abbot and his officials for council gatherings, and so on, the crowns and all the rest of the jewelled paraphernalia were duly laid out, carefully inspected by the Lord Chamberlain, and then handed formally into my custody, until they should be required on the following day.

I had been given complete orders regarding the system of keeping guard over the precious gew-gaws. Accordingly I placed two men on guard in the room, armed with revolvers, and with appropriate instructions and orders already written out. These two I then locked in the room, putting the key of the only entrance to it in my pocket.

This guard was kept up for the rest of the day and all through the night—until, in fact, I was relieved of my responsibility. The sentries were changed every two hours and on each occasion I was there to

unlock and lock the door—so I didn't get a lot of sleep. The men had a better time, having two hours on and then four hours off duty.

As a rest-room for those not actually on guard, we were given the 'Jericho Chamber' in which to eat, sleep, and spend our time. Which caused one of my stalwarts to remark :

" Well, I've often been told to go to Jericho, and here I am at last ! "

Our meals were suitably provided from the Abbey kitchen, and, although throughout the night there was much coming and going and bustle all over the rest of the building, nothing happened to mar the quiet and safety of our temporary sanctuary.

And all the time, outside and inside, the crowds were steadily accumulating. By the early morning all the world's notables were gathered in the Abbey, except, of course—in accordance with a strange convention—those whose heads already bore a crown. By 8.30 a.m. everybody had to be in their appointed places, while our comrades, the other Warders of the Tower, had taken up their historic position on guard at the entrance to the Abbey.

The young Duke of Norfolk, as Earl Marshal, was now in sole charge of all matters appertaining to the arrival of our own Royalty, etc., and I received orders from him to allow certain of the articles in my charge to be removed to their places on the High Altar.

By this time the Jericho Chamber was being put to quite a number of uses in addition to forming a guardroom for myself and my men, and at about 9.30 a.m. a lady dressed in the robes of a Peeress strolled in. I took no special notice, because all sorts of people were by now coming in and out of the room, some on legitimate business, and others not. No doubt the waiting crowd found the passage of time slow and tedious.

But presently this lady approached me and asked, with a most gracious smile, to be allowed to inspect the treasures I was guarding.

I deeply regretted having to refuse the request of so gracious a lady, but could do nothing but repeat my orders, and even show her the typewritten copy of them in my possession.

Rather to my surprise she was not prepared to accept my refusal!

"But surely," she remonstrated, "I may have the privilege without any such formality? I am the Duchess of ——! You can make an exception in my case!"

"Your Grace," I replied, "I am sorry, but I have my orders to carry out, and I can only repeat them to justify my saying no!"

After which, realizing that I was adamant, the Duchess retired. I have a notion that she was trying a bit of bluff in order to while away the time!

At ten o'clock the Earl Marshal himself appeared, accompanied by the Abbey officials, to convey the rest of the Jewels and the Regalia to their appointed places, some going to the High Altar, others through the body of the Cathedral down to the entrance.

We were not yet relieved of our guard-duty, and so we marched with the Jewels down the entire length of the choir and nave, through an assembly of people the like of which I had never seen gathered before.

It is impossible for me to describe the scene, but at the time my principal thought was that, amidst all that glittering throng, I and my small band must have looked rather out of place in our comparatively plain blue livery in which we had spent the night!

Having handed over the Jewels, we then marched

back to the Jericho Chamber, and as we had no further duties amidst all the pomp and ceremony, we just sat and listened-in to what was going on by means of a wireless set supplied for us by the B.B.C. There seemed something strangely incongruous in thus sitting in our Tudor dress, and there in that old-world chamber, eagerly drinking in the ceremony that was proceeding, so to speak, next door to us, by means of that most modern of inventions, the radio.

By two o'clock the crowd had all departed, and the Abbey was left, for the time being, to its customary cloistered silence.

The Jewels had been returned to us, and we continued to mount guard over them until we were relieved by a similar body of Yeomen Warders, whose duty it was to convey the Jewels back to the Tower.

By this time we had been thirty hours on guard over something which no one was in the least likely to attempt to steal. I honestly believe that if, at such a time, the Jewels had been displayed to the mob in an ordinary shop-window, quite unguarded, not a soul would have thought of stealing them!

Anyway, our duty had been a wearying one, and we all felt pretty tired, and glad enough to make our way back to the peace and quietness of our beloved old fortress, where the glittering baubles we had been watching over so carefully were once more replaced in their old home, to await the passing and the advent of yet another king!

Sometimes, as I stand by them in their room in the Wakefield Tower, I reflect on this, and then the jewels with which they are studded seem to gaze out on the world like brilliant, but peaceful eyes that have, in their time, seen much more panoply and glory, and have found it, after all, but empty

vanity. And the words of old Omar, the Tent-maker, slip into my mind :

‘ Think, in this battered Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way. . . ! ’

From which you will gather that life within the grey walls of the old Tower breeds a certain amount of philosophical reflection !

CHAPTER XXXI

'THE KING'S KEYS' AND THE 'LAST POST'

AT the Tower of London the day closes with the Ceremony of the Keys, and so it is perhaps fitting that I should close this story of my life in uniform with a few words about this ancient and picturesque ceremony.

Until recently, the Ceremony of the Keys was more or less a mystery (using the word in its older sense) to the general public, for only the very privileged were allowed to witness it. Latterly the B.B.C. have made familiar to the ears of the great listening public the audible words thereof. But, as anyone who has witnessed this once important and still highly impressive ceremonial will agree, there is more to it than mere sound !

So far as can be ascertained, this ceremonial locking-up of the Tower for the night dates to as far back as the year 1321, for there exists a copy of a Royal Charter of that date, giving authority for the appointment of John o' London 'Master of the King's Keys,' on a payment of fourpence a day and a gown a year, and power to appoint a varlet to assist him at one penny *per diem* and one gown a year, and giving detailed instruction as to the duties to be carried out by the said John o' London, relating to the care of the locks and bolts on the gates, and the locking up of the same.

Each night as darkness fell, the Master of the King's Keys would solemnly carry out his important (and in those days it undoubtedly *was* important)

duty. He would set out on his round of the gates, surrounded by an escort of armed Warders, and with a torch carried aloft to dispel the darkness in their immediate neighbourhood.

Stillness and silence were demanded from all bystanders while the procession passed from Gate to Gate, each one being duly and securely locked, and the ceremony finished on a solemn invocation, spoken by the Master of the Keys, to the Deity, to preserve his Liege Lord, the King.

Inasmuch as no reference can be found to any cessation of this ceremony, nor record of any revival of it, it is safe to assume that it has taken place nightly for at least the past seven hundred and seven years, without, so far as is known, a single night being missed !

This is how the Ceremony is carried out to-day :

At 10 p.m. the Chief Warder (or his deputy), clad in a long scarlet cloak and Tudor hat, walks to the Bloody Tower, where he is met by an escort, consisting of a sergeant, two fully armed private soldiers, and a bugler carrying the lantern which takes the place of the original torch.

The sergeant of the escort is in command, and gives the necessary orders. The party, with the carrier of the keys as its central figure, marches from Gate to Gate. As each one is reached, the voice of the sergeant rings out his crisp orders—to halt, turn inwards, present arms—while the Warder locks the gate. Then to slope arms, turn outwards, and quick march to the next gate.

The first Gate so dealt with is the Barrier Gate, which is the outermost, on the road leading up to Tower Hill. Next visited is the Middle Gate, which guards the approach across the Moat.

Here, as the party approaches, the Spur Guard turns out smartly, and, with a clatter of arms and accoutrements, presents arms while the second Gate

is locked. Then on to the Byward Gate, guarding the approach to the Outer Ward, where a sentry is posted who ‘ presents arms.’

From this point the party marches along Water Lane to the innermost gateway under the Bloody Tower, where the gates that once closed it still hang, but are no longer used.

Here a sentry is posted, and as the party approaches he clatters to the ‘ ready ’ and, a moment later, his voice rings out, in sharp challenge :

“ Halt ! Who comes there ? ”

Comes the deep-toned reply of the Chief Warder :
“ Keys ! ”

“ Whose keys ? ” demands the sentry.

“ King George’s Keys ! ”

“ Pass, King George’s Keys—all’s well ! ”

The sentry rattles to the ‘ present arms ’ as the party tramps by.

Meanwhile, in the interior of the Inner Ward, the Main Guard has turned out, and is drawn up awaiting the party in order to salute the Keys.

The party marches in, and halts opposite the Guard. Comes the voice of the officer in command of the Guard :

“ Guard and escort ! . . . Present arms ! ”

With a rattle and a clatter all the troops come to the Present. Any spectators there may stand silently by, the males with their heads bared.

There is a moment’s pause, then the Warder steps out from the centre of the escort, and standing straight and stiff in the centre of the narrow roadway, removes his Tudor hat and cries out, in deep, ringing tones :

“ God preserve King George ! ”

“ Amen ! ” The response comes, deep-throated, from Guard and escort.

The escort marches back to the Guard. The bugler sounds the ‘ Last Post.’ The Guard dismiss

and go back to their guardroom. The Chief Warder makes his way to the King's House and delivers the Keys up to the Governor, and the ceremony of closing the old Tower for the night is over.

Thus it has been through all these centuries—the ceremony never varying, except, of course, for the substituting of one Royal name for another.

Except that, on one occasion, the wrong name was given, and on another no name could be given at all. The first occasion was when King Edward VII came to the Throne. The first time the ceremony was performed after the passing of Queen Victoria, the question: 'Who's Keys?' was answered by: 'King Albert's Keys!' 'This was before it was known that the new monarch would adopt the name of Edward. The second occasion was when King Edward VIII abdicated, and then no one knew what name to give!

I am drawing to the end of my chronicle, so redolent of the ghosts of the past, and it is perhaps for that reason that the question so often asked me: 'Have you ever seen a ghost in the Tower?' should come to my mind. The Tower, of course, is packed with myth and legend, in which discarnate entities play their part, but I have never yet met anybody who claims to have actually seen one.

But there are stories. One of the myths is that: 'The grass never grew on this spot!'—in connection with the stone-paved space marked out as the site of the execution of Henry VIII's unfortunate Queen, Anne Bolcyn, in 1536, and four other ladies. Once, it is said, some old Warders actually detected signs of growing grass on this spot and determined that the legend must not be spoilt. Two of their number undertook to remove the offending growth, and at dead of night, clad in their watch-coats, they got to work. On their knees, busily weeding between the cracks of the stones,

they were seen by the sentry on the King’s House, who immediately gave the alarm to his Guard, that ghosts were swarming out of the ground on Tower Green!

The Officer of the Guard and some of his men immediately went to investigate, and were startled to see, indeed, dimly descried, ghostly figures, apparently rising out of the solid earth!

It is said that their hair almost stood up, and that they were too paralysed by the uncanny sight to say or do anything—until the spell was broken when one ‘ghost’ spoke to another, in an entirely unghostly voice, saying:

“I think that’s all right, now, Bill. . . !”

Then the Guard challenged, and explanations were duly made.

Another myth of the Tower deals with the existence of those two world-renowned giants, Gog and Magog. Actually figures in a coat-of-arms, they were cited as living personalities by the late Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, in his classic, *The Tower of London*—with the result that almost everyone believes them to have been real people. We Warders are constantly asked to show their graves, and no one will believe us when we say that they never existed. So we have found that it saves endless trouble and argument to lead misinformed and persistent visitors to a couple of massive, square gravestones, removed from the old graveyard of St. Peter’s Chapel, and to solemnly point to them as the gravestones of the two Giants of the Tower. The size of the stones lends credibility to the story, and everyone is satisfied!

Amongst the inscriptions on the walls in the Beauchamp Tower is one made by the Earl of Warwick when he was confined there in 1554, for his part in the Lady Jane Grey plot. The family name was, of course, Dudley, and his inscription

of it is still very plain to see, though it looks like JOHN DUDLE. It is to this spot that certain Americans are led when they ask to see the original 'Yankee Doodle'!

It is always a sad and rather difficult matter to say 'good-bye,' especially when one has been enjoying oneself. I have enjoyed myself while writing this book, as old men like myself do enjoy themselves in reliving past sorrows and gladnesses, tragedies and comedies.

When one has been enjoying oneself, and the time for parting comes, it is customary to cover quite a lot of emotion by cheerfully saying: 'Well, good-bye, and thanks so much for a jolly time!'

I have had a good time while writing this book—and I have had a good time for most of my life. So I want to say good-bye in the right spirit, first by thanking the publishers who will publish, and the readers who will read this book, for the good time I have had in writing it.

And secondly by thanking those who have contributed so much to the joys of my past life. My mother and father, for all that they did for me. Sergeant Bob Bradley, for having persuaded me to enlist in what I consider to be the finest regiment in the world—the 5th Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

Nor am I alone in that opinion! I have quoted elsewhere what 'Bob' Bradley, General Milman, and others have had to say to me about it. Now I will quote the words of one other great soldier.

In 1924 I was awarded a special distinction in the shape of a medal for 'Long and Meritorious Service,' a decoration peculiar to the Army, and conferred upon only a limited number of individuals under special regulations.

The late Field-Marshal Lord Methuen, then Constable of the Tower, ordered a special parade

of the Garrison and Warders to witness the Presentation, on which occasion he made a speech of which the following is, as nearly as possible, an exact transcription of the opening :

‘ I did not know the Warder to whom I am to have the privilege of making this presentation, and was rather at a loss as to what I could say in a personal sense. I have just read that Yeoman Warder John Fraser spent twenty-five years in that famous regiment the Northumberland Fusiliers. I have had the honour to command that regiment in my Division in South Africa, and I know what to say to its late sergeant-major. . . ! ’

The twenty-five years I spent in this, to me, finest regiment in the Service, were spent in a life of adventure and change such as can be enjoyed in few other ways. The ‘soul-deadening’ effect of discipline, as so many people seem to think it, has no real existence at all. In many individual cases it is the only means of learning the primitive virtues of order, regularity, truthfulness, obedience, punctuality, and self-respect. It teaches the individual to control himself (and later, possibly, to also control others), and collectively it creates out of an incoherent, aimless mob, incapable of any reasonable decision, and easily turned to panic—that most devastating of all human emotions—the most perfect of all machines, a disciplined force, and that finest of all human institutions, a regiment of British Infantry !

And so, for all this, I thank my regiment.

Donald Munro, my comrade over many years, I thank for nine years of the most delightful companionship, and my other old comrades, in a lesser degree, for the same.

To Charlotte Nicholson I owe many thanks for the inspiration in life she gave me, and for her

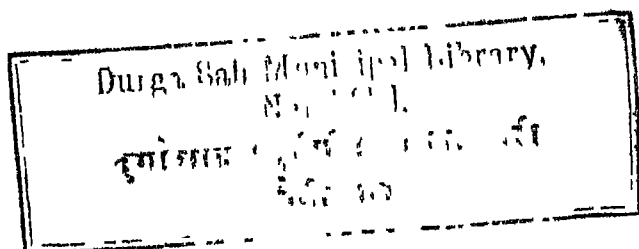
influence, which helped to keep me from dropping into the dangers and evils of garrison-town life.

And my own dear wife and family I must thank from the very depths of my heart for the comfort and joy they have, one and all, brought me.

To my many friends and comrades in the Tower I give my thanks for all they have done to make the thirty-seven years I have spent within these walls so peaceful and happy.

Finally, I have one more word of thanks to express — this time to the readers who have joined an old soldier in 'fighting his battles o'er again' by having the patience to read this simple narrative to

THE END



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Edward of Kent :
Father of Queen Victoria**

DAVID DUFF

Author of "Princess Louise—Duchess of Argyll", etc.

EDWARD AUGUSTUS, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III, was born at Buckingham House, at noon on November 2nd, 1767.

The Duke is best remembered as the father of the greatest queen England ever had, Victoria. But for his premature death he might have had a bigger place in British history—as king of England. For if the Duke of Kent had outlived his brother, William IV (Duke of Clarence), he would have come to the throne, taking precedence over his daughter.

Very little has been written of the first fifty years of the Duke's life, though they were crammed with interest, strange happenings and adventure. Historians have been content with concentrating on the last three years of his life (1817-20), during which time the Duke, under most extraordinary circumstances, arranged and carried out his marriage with the Princess of Saxe-Coburg and the little Princess Victoria was born.

In his private life the Duke met many squalls. He was unpopular with his father, George III; he quarrelled with all his brothers, in particular the Regent, an amazing scene taking place between them at the christening of Queen Victoria; he fell hopelessly into debt, some remaining unpaid until Queen Victoria ascended the throne and cleared her father's memory.

The Duke's later years were influenced by the forecast of a gypsy woman who prophesied that he would be father of a great queen. History proved this prophecy to be correct, although the Duke reaped no benefit. He died almost in penury at Sidmouth in 1820, the Duchess, his wife, having no money to return to London with the infant Victoria.

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Stories of Kipling's adventures among the privates of John Fraser's regiment, whom he visited frequently while seeking colour for his soldier tales, are here told for the first time.

Another amusing story tells of his rescue of Lord Baden Powell from a gang of high spirited soldiers who had not recognised the great man.

As a beefeater, John Fraser spent 35 years in the Tower of London, that picturesque home of ceremonial. He has played an important part in many ceremonies, has lived in the house where Lady Jane Grey was imprisoned before her execution, and knows stories of spies imprisoned and executed in the Tower.

At the time of the Coronation John Fraser guarded the Regalia in the Jerusalem Tower of Westminster Abbey. He has conducted many distinguished visitors round the Tower, including the Princess Royal.

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Prince Ahmad of Egypt

JAMES BLAND

PRINCE AHMAD SEIF-ED-DIN was fifty-six when his unhappy career was brought to a close by his death at Istanbul. Although the Prince, during a period of forty years, monopolised the headlines of the British Press on a number of occasions, few people realise that he spent a large portion of his life in England—behind the walls of a mental home. His troubles began in 1898 when, at the age of seventeen, he shot at and wounded his brother-in-law, later King Fuad of Egypt. His sister had complained that she

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was being ill-treated by her royal husband and, in a fit of rage, Prince Ahmad went to a fashionable club in Cairo and, before an audience of distinguished politicians and diplomats, drew a revolver and fired, wounding Prince Fuad in the neck. Criminal proceedings followed and Prince Ahmad was charged with attempted murder, was fined £1,800 and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. He began his sentence as an ordinary prisoner but was later announced insane. He was transferred to a private English mental home, and for more than 25 years relatives and friends intrigued to secure his release. Then one day in the summer of 1925, the Prince disappeared. A hue and cry broke out, and it was discovered that the Prince had crossed to the Continent.

Prince Ahmad, while in England, was estimated to have an income of £200,000 a year. But his estates, said to be worth £4,000,000, were sequestered. He attempted, in vain, to sue the British Government for this amount. In 1933 Prince Ahmad married a Turkish girl and settled in Istanbul.

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The Lost Legion

GUSTAVE BECVAR, M.C.

ONE of the most amazing yet practically unknown epics of the war was the march of 70,000 Czech soldiers across Russia, and over the plains of Siberia to Vladivostock. The efforts of these men altered the course of history, for, after the fall of the Tsarist regime and the utter collapse of the Russian armies, they were largely instrumental in preventing the Germans from tapping the vast food stores of Siberia.

Had the Germans secured these food supplies they might have staved off internal disruption, and prolonged the war for many months.

With the rise of the Bolsheviks, the Czech legions were left alone, face to face with the might of the German and Austrian armies, and surrounded as well with hostile revolutionary Russian troops. The only thing to do was to fight their way to Vladivostok, and go home by sea.

The thrilling story of this amazing struggle, which lasted until 1920, is here related by one of the legionaries, who,

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incidentally, was the last man, other than Bolsheviks, to talk to General Kolchak. In this book he tells many hitherto unpublished facts and stories about the ill-fated General. Mr. Becvar possesses many war decorations, but it is interesting to note that he received his M.C. from the hands of General Knox, who was in command of the British troops in Siberia.

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